# GROUP THEORIES OF RELIGION AND THE INDIVIDUAL

CLEMENT C. J. WEBB

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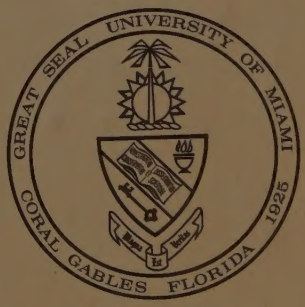


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Mr. & Mrs. Robert Cushman

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BY

CLEMENT C. J. WEBB

FELLOW OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD
LATE WILDE LECTURER ON NATURAL AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C.
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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*First published in 1916*

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ERRATA.

Page 28, line 12, *for* εἰδῶν *read* εἰδῶν.

Page 88, line 9, *add* inverted commas after "*indécomposables.*"

Page 172, last three lines *should read* "not one which (as, unless I misunderstand her picturesque language in the Introduction to *Themis*, she supposes) has no such abiding significance."

# PREFACE

THE following pages contain the substance of a course of lectures delivered by me in the summer term of 1914 as Wilde Lecturer on Natural and Comparative Religion in the University of Oxford. They are devoted to an examination of certain theories as to the nature of Religion put forward by a group of French scholars, of whom the most prominent are M. Durkheim and M. Lévy Bruhl, as stated in such volumes of their organ, *L'Année Sociologique*, as had been published up to the time at which these lectures were composed, in M. Lévy Bruhl's *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures*, and in certain articles contributed by M. Durkheim to the *Revue de Métaphysique*

*et Morale*, one of which has since been for the most part incorporated in a book called *Les Formes Elémentaires de la Vie Religieuse*, which was originally published at Paris in 1912, and has lately appeared in an English dress. This work I had not before me when I wrote my lectures, and I have thought it best, as I find that my judgment of M. Durkheim's work, so far as I was then acquainted with it, has not been in any important way affected by my study of the completed account of his views which is now accessible, to leave my criticisms as they stand, adding occasionally in a footnote a reference to his book, and supplying, where I had cited the introductory article which appeared in the *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*, the corresponding page of the English translation of *Les Formes Elémentaires de la Vie Religieuse*.

The lectures upon which this book is based were delivered in what now seems the remote period before the European War. Even in

that "world-earthquake" the republic of letters remains, at least to the eye of faith, one and indivisible; and it would be treason to that great fellowship were national enmity suffered to deflect a scholar's judgment. Yet I may be permitted to count it a fortunate circumstance that I have not been saddened, while preparing my book for the press, by the thought that those whom I was discussing were now on the opposite side in a quarrel in which I am whole-heartedly persuaded that my country is fighting on the side of justice and of liberty; and that I am able to salute the scholars whose names most often occur in my pages, not only as fellow-students, but as allies in the great conflict which is now never absent from our thoughts. It is true that I have here come forward, not as in the main a sympathizer with the conclusions of those whose views I have undertaken to examine, but rather as a critic of their methods and results. But, whatever may be the case in other fields, in that of

science criticism is no hostile act, but a welcome form of co-operation in that pursuit of truth to which both critics and criticized alike have dedicated their lives.

OXFORD,
*January* 1916.

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# Group Theories of Religion and the Individual

## CHAPTER I

### SOCIOLOGY

THE purpose of these lectures is to examine, in the first place, the theory respecting the nature of Religion which is associated with the names of M. Émile Durkheim and his collaborators in *L'Année Sociologique*. This examination will be here undertaken with the special object in view of inquiring how far this theory adequately explains or expresses the nature of the religious experience as it exists in the souls of individuals who have reached the stage in their intellectual development at which the opposition between the claims of society and of the individual has

emerged into consciousness as a conflict of rights. The Statute establishing the Wilde Lectureship directs the attention of the Lecturer to the higher religions of the world as distinguished from those of what is often called "the lower culture"; and it is to a stage of intellectual development at which the opposition I have mentioned has emerged that these religions belong. I shall, therefore, in treating of the theory or theories of M. Durkheim and his colleagues have the higher religions mainly in view, although these writers themselves prefer, on the whole, to take the majority of their illustrations from the religions of the lower culture. They have their reasons for this preference; but their theories are by them certainly intended to apply to the higher religions as well; nor do they by any means neglect the consideration of them altogether. The remarkably well-informed pages in which contributors to *L'Année Sociologique* year by year record, and, in the case of the more important works,

briefly review, a host of new books bearing on their studies, contain the names of almost as many dealing with the higher religions as with the lower.

I shall begin with the attempt to set forth in my own words, so far as I have grasped it, the general theory respecting the nature of Religion defended by M. Durkheim and his collaborators. The chief of these are M. Lévy Bruhl, who is the author of a notable work on *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures*, and MM. Hubert and Mauss, who have in conjunction produced certain studies on the important subjects of Sacrifice and of Magic, which enjoy a high reputation among students of comparative religion. I shall rely for my facts with respect to the views of these scholars on the volumes which have appeared of their organ, *L'Année Sociologique*, on M. Lévy Bruhl's above-mentioned work, and also his work on Ethics,[1] and on certain articles of M. Durkheim's published in the *Revue de*

[1] English translation by Elizabeth Lee, 1905.

*Métaphysique et Morale*, and forming an introduction to a large work which he has planned, and has begun to execute, on the elementary forms of religious thought and life.[1] It is especially in these last articles that, as I shall afterwards try to point out, M. Durkheim seems to me to take a somewhat different line from that of some of his principal collaborators in *L'Année Sociologique* (though not, I think, inconsistent with what I have read elsewhere of his own writing), and one which is, in my judgment, a more sound and reasonable one than that to which M. Lévy Bruhl and M. Mauss, at any rate, appear to be committed.

Though I am here concerned only with the attitude of the French sociologists to the study of Religion, it must be borne in mind that this is only part of a general theory of the nature and scope of what they call Sociology.

[1] This work has since appeared. A translation into English by Mr. J. W. Swain has been published by Messrs. George Allen and Unwin.

This is conceived by them to be, like the πολιτική of Aristotle, the master-science, to which all the sciences concerned with things human are subsidiary or auxiliary.

Just, then, as the individual human consciousness, although resulting from the co-operation of many distinct brain-cells, has yet its own laws, which constitute the subject-matter of Psychology, and which could not be deduced or inferred from the physiological laws determining the nature of the separate cells, but must be ascertained by observation of the behaviour of individual human beings; so, too, there must be recognized a collective consciousness, resulting from the co-operation of individual human beings, which has in turn laws of its own, laws which are not to be inferred from those of individual psychology, but to be discovered by observation of the behaviour of human groups or societies. These laws of the consciousness of groups or societies constitute the subject-matter of Sociology.

While, in every department, the develop-

ment of the intellect in individuals is conditioned by their social background, so that the source of our notions of time and space, of cause and substance, and so forth, is to be sought in what these writers call "collective representations," certain other notions, among which are included those which are used in Religion, have reference to no other object than to such "collective representations." What is meant by this phrase "collective representations"? It is important to understand this, since the whole sociological theory of our authors hinges upon it.

It is, at present, our task rather to explain the phrase than to criticize it. But it is necessary to point out that (whether this is realized or not by those who use it) it implies the attempt, so common with psychologists, and so often assumed by them to be beyond question legitimate, to start not with objects of consciousness, but with internal facts of consciousness, ideas, *Vorstellungen*, representations, call them what you will, which come

somehow to be afterwards interpreted either as themselves objects independent of the consciousness which we have of them, or as representative (whence the word favoured by the French sociologists) of such independent objects. As I doubt whether this attempt, so usual among psychologists, is legitimate, I necessarily doubt also whether there does not lurk in the use of the word "representations" a misleading assumption. In the last resort, as is illustrated by the development of English philosophy from Locke to Berkeley and to Hume, those who take this starting-point will be led towards doubt or denial of the existence of objects of consciousness independent of our consciousness of them. Our sociologists, however, do not, if I understand them, doubt that there really exist objects independent of our consciousness; but they suppose that these are not at first perceived as they really exist. For there is at first perceived—or rather (as from a later point of view we should say) imagined—along with

them much that *we* should not imagine except under the contagious influence of the other members of our group. What is thus imagined, then, by many members of a group, each under the influence of the rest, is a "collective representation."

I do not find in our authors any great light thrown on the problem, which suggests itself at once, of the origination of these "collective representations." It is the theme of M. Lévy Bruhl's *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures* [1] that the minds of members of primitive groups work quite differently from ours. I shall discuss shortly some of the salient features of this doctrine. But before doing so I wish to call attention to the fact that it obviously enables this question of the origination of these "collective representations" to remain unanswered. With ourselves the delusions which excite a multitude are started by somebody, though it may very often be difficult afterwards to discover

[1] Second edition, Paris, 1912.

who it was, and though the conviction of their reality grows under the influence of mutual suggestion and may even cause actual hallucination. But M. Lévy Bruhl may hold (I do not remember that he says) that, at a stage of human development where the sense of individual distinction from the group is far weaker than with us, there is no need to suppose an individual originator. Since I do not myself hold that primitive minds are as different from ours as M. Lévy Bruhl contends that they are, I do not feel completely satisfied in dispensing altogether with individual origination of "collective representations." But I do not question the influence of "collective representations" over the imagination of individuals of a group; nor do I doubt that this is likely to be most complete where the sense of individuality is least developed and the habit of doubt and criticism rarest, as they would be, no doubt, in what M. Lévy Bruhl calls *les sociétés inférieures*.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LAWS OF CONTRADICTION AND PARTICIPATION

I NOW propose to examine, so far as it concerns us here, this doctrine, which I have mentioned as advanced by M. Lévy Bruhl in his work on *The Mental Functions in Societies of the Lower Culture*, that the minds of primitive men work very differently from ours. It is clear that such a doctrine will afford a basis for a theory of Religion as essentially belonging to a stage of mental development which the civilized European has outgrown, but the products of which he is for that very reason apt to misunderstand. For he is naturally inclined to suppose that religious doctrines must rest upon perceptions such as he might have had himself, that they are

amenable to the logical methods which he is accustomed to use, and that they can be legitimately discussed as he would discuss a scientific theory or hypothesis of to-day. Hence we have a Philosophy of Religion and a religious Psychology which are alike, in M. Lévy Bruhl's judgment, vitiated from the outset by ignoring the origin of religious doctrines in "collective representations" belonging to a pre-logical stage of mental development, and essentially inconsistent with the methods of a modern philosopher or psychologist. The now familiar distinction of "judgments of value" from "judgments of existence," by which many thinkers have sought to express a difference between the subject-matter of Moral Philosophy or Philosophy of Religion and that of Natural Science, appears to him to be an evasion. "Judgments of value" are merely "sentimental aphorisms." Their source is in "collective representations," and apart from a knowledge of the constitution of the group in which any such

"collective representation" originated it cannot be understood. So, too, the religious experiences studied by writers like Professor Starbuck and the late Professor William James are, according to M. Mauss, in a review of the latter's celebrated *Varieties of Religious Experience*,[1] wrongly described by a word which, like "experience," seems to rank them with our perceptions of the material world. The champions of vigorous traditional orthodoxy (the Vatican, for example, in its condemnation of Roman Catholic Modernism) are in the right in their conviction that the spirit of free investigation is incompatible with that of the surrender to collective suggestion which is of the essence of Religion, and which may be fairly described by the old-fashioned names of "faith" or "belief," but not without great risk of confusion by the newfangled name of "religious experience," dear to certain philosophers and psychologists of to-day.

[1] *L'Annee Sociologique*, vii. 204 foll.

## Contradiction and Participation

The chief distinction which M. Lévy Bruhl holds to exist between the mental functions in *les sociétés inférieures*, and those which are at any rate predominant in the civilized world that we know, is expressed by him in the form of a contrast between the *Law of Contradiction* which dominates our thinking and the *Law of Participation*, as he calls it, which dominates that of more primitive men. A stage of mental development, we may admit, which did not, I do not say *acknowledge*, but *use* the Law of Contradiction, would be rightly called by M. Lévy Bruhl's favourite designation of "pre-logical." But a careful study of M. Lévy Bruhl's elaboration of his theme suggests serious doubts as to his appreciation either of the meaning of the Law of Contradiction or of the nature of some of the most important problems which are involved by *our* logic, the logic of the modern civilized man.

For by the Law of Contradiction M. Lévy Bruhl seems always to mean, not the law that

nothing can at once be and not be A, but an imagined law that nothing can be at once A and also B (which is other than A). It is quite true that he often alleges, as breaches of the Law of Contradiction by primitive thought, instances in which primitive man supposes (if we may, for the moment, describe his supposition for our own convenience in the technical language of logic) that the same thing may have at once two predicates which *we* have reason to suppose mutually incompatible. No doubt in such cases we should support our view by saying "X cannot both be A and B (e.g. a human being and a wolf); for the nature of B may be shown to exclude the nature of A, and therefore the Law of Contradiction forbids their co-existence in the same subject." But this must be shown by an argument addressed to the particular compatibility alleged. The Law of Contradiction *as such*, apart from an investigation of what the natures of "man" and "wolf" imply, no more forbids us to entertain the suggestion

that a man may be a wolf than it does the suggestion that a banker may be a historian, like Grote, or a school inspector a poet, like Matthew Arnold.

In fact, the denial of the mutual exclusiveness of particular natures is perfectly compatible with full acknowledgment of the Law of Contradiction as a law of thought; and, in fact, hesitation to allow that two particular natures are predicable together or are other than absolutely opposed to one another may arise, no less than over-readiness to believe two particular natures compatible, from habit, suggestion, or (if the phrase be preferred) "collective representations" enforced by the tradition of a society. The reluctance of many to entertain the possibility suggested by Darwin's *Origin of Species* that certain very diverse forms of life are actually related by descent is an instance in point. The Law of Contradiction has nothing to do with the case. It is not the Law of Contradiction that either, on the one hand, forbids

us to accept the kinship of an Australian blackfellow with his totem emu or kangaroo, or, on the other hand, warrants us in accepting his and our inclusion in the same natural order with the monkeys and the lemurs.

And if M. Lévy Bruhl seems to interpret the Law of Contradiction in a quite unwarranted way, what are we to say of the rival Law of Participation, which, as we learn from him, obtains in the "pre-logical" stage of human development? I am constrained to say that it seems to me to be a mere chimera. I do not mean that there is no such "participation" as he speaks of in describing it. That is what he would himself say—and on that very account would place the "law" of it outside the sphere of *our* thinking. What I mean is rather that such "participation" is perfectly real, though not perhaps in the instances which he gives from the beliefs of primitive men. The whole question is not "Is there participation?" but "What participates in what?" And the answer to this

question belongs in each case, not to "logic," but to the particular science or branch of knowledge that concerns itself with the particular thing of which we happen to be speaking. Apart from something which may be called "participation" (though, as Plato and Aristotle long ago showed,[1] it is not always a satisfactory name), the principal questions connected with predication, such as the question of the relation of the particular to the universal, or the question to which Aristotle's list of Categories was an attempt to supply an answer, would be meaningless. But will any serious logician say that these questions are themselves meaningless? I should not wonder, however, if M. Lévy Bruhl would say that they were, or if he were to give the discussion of such problems the bad name of "metaphysics" and let it go hang. Or perhaps, in his preoccupation with the ingenious theory (to which I shall return), favoured by several of the French

[1] See Plato, *Parm.* 131; Aristotle, *Metaph.* A. 9. 990*b*, 991.

sociologists, which seeks in tribal divisions the origin of the notion of Categories, he may have overlooked the necessity, if we are to understand not primitive "prelogical" thought only, but our own civilized logical thought as well, of drawing a distinction between different Categories or kinds of predicate.

All through men's mental development there are and must be present both the Law of Contradiction and also what M. Lévy Bruhl calls the Law of Participation, the recognition of a κοινωνία εἰδῶν,[1] a participation of natures, implied in the simplest act of predication, which says, not "A is A" (for that tells one nothing) but "A is B." The formulation of such laws in abstraction from particular instances of them is, of course, the work of a more advanced reflection. But what the laws express *in abstracto* must have been present *in concreto* as far back as we can speak of human minds at all. There is no justification for a sharp contrast, such as

[1] See Plato, *Soph.* 251A foll.

## Contradiction and Participation

M. Lévy Bruhl would have us acknowledge, between a "prelogical" age in which the Law of Participation reigned supreme and the Law of Contradiction was unknown, and a "logical" age in which the Law of Contradiction has ousted its rival, and the deposed sovereign continues only to lurk, as it were, in the congenial gloom of the sanctuary and the law-court.

Our present concern is with the sanctuary. No doubt Religion is full of doctrines disconcerting to a view of reality which discards Participation and, like the ancient Cynics, cannot find it in its heart to say that A is B, since B is confessed to be other than A, so that the Law of Contradiction (understood as M. Lévy Bruhl understands it) would be violated. We hear of men rich in merits which other men (as we should say) have accumulated, of men with a sense of responsibility for what not they but others have done, of men becoming gods, of God becoming man. It is easy to find savage

parallels for these beliefs (which I have taken from more than one "higher" religion), and say that here we have mere traditions which the power of collective suggestion has kept alive from an age in which our predecessors' mental operations were different from ours. But, after all (as M. Lévy Bruhl and his collaborators are quite ready to admit), many of the notions which we use in Natural Science have a pedigree of the same sort as the dogmas of Religion. This fact is upon occasion, indeed, insisted upon by our authors, in reinforcement of the view associated with the most celebrated name among philosophers of their country in the last century, that of Auguste Comte—the view that true science is strictly "positive," and that "metaphysical" notions like those of "substance" and "cause" are only shadowy survivals of the "theological" conceptions belonging to an earlier stage of the history of the human mind. MM. Hubert and Mauss, indeed, in their dissertation on Magic to which I have already

referred, expressly say: "We should not be rash in thinking that, to a considerable extent, whatever there is still left in the notions of force, cause, end, substance that is not 'positive' [no doubt in Comte's sense of the word], but mystical and poetical, belongs to the old habit of mind to which Magic owed its existence and of which the human mind is slow in disembarrassing itself."[1] Still, it would not, I imagine, be denied that these latter notions had proved useful in the development of what they are apt to call the "lay" view of the world.[2] Why should we not admit that there are facts of experience which we recognize these religious doctrines as intended to express, and as in part expressing, although their phraseology may have been crystallized at a period when the analysis of these facts was as yet very

[1] *L'Année Sociologique*, vii. 146.

[2] I will only refer here in passing to some just observations of Dr. Figgis in his interesting book *The Churches in the Modern State* on the modern French use of the word *laique*, which so frequently recurs in the pages of *L'Année Sociologique*.

imperfect, and when they were mixed up with much which we should now regard as illusory?

MM. Hubert and Mauss in the same study of Magic which I have just quoted observe[1] that Magic has a certain affinity on the one side to the arts and sciences, on the other to Religion. The "lay" life (as they call it) is indebted to Magic on its former, or technical, side; and this, it is plain, makes it, on the whole, for them a more valuable product of primitive ways of thinking than its cousin on the other side, Religion, which is orientated (as they put it) not towards the "lay" life but towards Metaphysics, the Comtist tradition of hostility to which these writers for the most part maintain.

I have already referred to M. Mauss's objection to the use of the expression "religious experience" instead of what he takes to be the more appropriate words, "faith" and "belief." If all that was meant here was to suggest that the association of the word "ex-

[1] *Loc. supra cit.*

perience" in the phraseology of the school of Locke with experience by way of sense perception makes it unfit for the less restricted use which has become usual in philosophical literature during the last half-century, there might be something to be said for the contention. But plainly more than this is meant. The words "faith" and "belief" are preferred because they create a prejudice against the claim of the religious consciousness to be the organ by which we apprehend any features of reality which are other than phenomena of organic life upon this planet. For social phenomena, as understood by the French sociologists, are certainly to be reckoned among the phenomena of organic life upon this planet. But, as we have seen, the foundation of the view of religion which we found in M. Lévy Bruhl is laid in his theory of the dependence of religious doctrine on the "Law of Participation," which presides over the "prelogical" stage of human mental development. This doctrine of the "prelogical"

character of the "Law of Participation," if consistently carried out, can, however, as has been suggested above, conduct us nowhere except to the barren Nominalism of the ancient Cynics, for which all genuine predication is illegitimate. M. Durkheim, indeed, expressly denies, in an article to which I shall refer again, published not in *L'Année Sociologique* but in the *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*, the imputation of Nominalism. But it is possible, as I have hinted, that M. Durkheim's views are not quite the same as those of M. Lévy Bruhl and some other of his collaborators in *L'Année Sociologique*. I have not, indeed, found any recognition in such of their writings as I have read of such divergence; but then it is very plain from a study of the volumes of *L'Année Sociologique* that the group consciousness in this band of scholars is very potent, and tends to render obligatory upon its members a number of common beliefs — beliefs *bien entendu* of a "lay" (that is, an anti-clerical)

character—dissent from which would incur suspicion of heresy. Still, M. Durkheim, in an article published not in *L'Année Sociologique* but in the *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*,[1] where he perhaps feels less strongly the influence of the sociological group-consciousness, does say quite clearly that Religion is, in his judgment at any rate, a permanent feature of human life, and complains that sociological study of primitive religious institutions should be supposed to be inimical to the existence of religion in the civilized society of to-day or of the future. I certainly do not think it need in itself be supposed to be so. Nor should one expect to find it so in the hands of a writer who can say, as M. Durkheim does in the article in the *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*,[2] that no permanent human institution (such as Religion) can rest on error or falsehood; that all religions are true in their way; and that if

[1] *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Eng. tr., p. 2.

[2] Ibid., pp. 2 foll.

those of more primitive groups are chosen by him for special study, this is purely for reasons of method, and on account of their greater homogeneity, which facilitates the task of generalization. But some of the collaborators of *L'Année Sociologique* express themselves very far from clearly if they do not mean to be understood as suggesting that the religious sentiment has no future before it in the "lay" civilization which will take its notion of the real world exclusively from "science"—as that word is understood in positivist and secularist circles. Hence the astonishment which we find expressed at what seems from this point of view the strange phenomenon of the obstinate persistence of the "religious sentiment" in the very modern civilization of the United States of America.

## CHAPTER III

### M. DURKHEIM'S DEFINITION OF RELIGION

WE will, however, turn now to M. Durkheim, who (we have seen) is less committed than some of his colleagues appear to be to a view which would make Religion a vanishing factor in human life. He has devoted considerable attention to the definition, as he puts it, of the religious phenomenon. I have argued elsewhere [1] that a definition of Religion is needless and impossible. But it will be useful to examine that put forward by M. Durkheim; we shall find it, if not satisfactory, yet on many accounts instructive.[2]

[1] *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 3.

[2] See *L'Année Sociologique*, ii. 1 foll. Another definition has since been given by M. Durkheim in his book (see

At the outset M. Durkheim frankly separates himself from those who approach the inquiry after a definition of Religion from the side of the most advanced forms of it. He takes as examples of those who do this two British thinkers, the late Edward Caird, Master of Balliol, and Dr. Jevons of Durham. He cannot conceive any explanation of such a procedure on their part except what he calls "theological and confessional prejudice." They are resolved to take Christianity — the religion in which they themselves were brought up—as the standard. But how do they know even that this *is* the most advanced form of Religion? It cannot be because it is the most recent in its origin, even if we could hold that the latest products of an evolution are always the highest—for Islam is younger than it.

*Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Eng. tr., pp. 23 foll.). The modifications, however, which he has here introduced into his original definition "imply," he tells us, "no essential change in the conception of the fact."

## M. Durkheim's Definition of Religion

The whole of this argument of M. Durkheim's appears to me misplaced. The Aristotelian principle that a process of development can only be understood in view of its outcome, its τέλος, is, I am sure, a sound one. Nor do I suppose that in judging of the relative elevation of forms of religion, morality, art, government, or anything else, Caird or Dr. Jevons would for a moment have thought chronology a sufficient guide. They would, no doubt, have admitted that there were *a priori* grounds, or what M. Durkheim would call such, for their valuation. But, after all, it is probably impossible to find any one who deals with these subjects and does not, as a matter of fact, classify the forms of religion, morality, art, and so on in some kind of scale of value, and who is not, as a matter of fact, guided by *a priori* considerations in so doing.

It is, of course, not to be denied that there is a danger in such valuation of being influenced by irrelevant associations, and no

doubt it is true that the study of lower forms is apt very much to enlarge the notion of the possibility of variation in religion, morality, and the rest which one may have formed from the study only of higher developments. This study is certainly one of the causes of our hesitation to-day to agree with those philosophers of an earlier time who found in God, Freedom, and Immortality the irreducible minimum of a religious creed. This very instance, however, is sufficient to show that the study of primitive religion here only reinforces what might have been learned from the study of admittedly higher religions other than those with which European theologians of the seventeenth century were familiar.

I am thus not convinced by M. Durkheim's polemic against Edward Caird and Dr. Jevons. Nor do I feel that the last word is said when he goes on to object to certain suggestive definitions of Max Müller's that a reference to *mystery* cannot be admitted into a defini-

tion of religion, because what seems mysterious to us in primitive religion is not at all so to primitive man. Against this observation I would appeal to M. Durkheim's collaborator, M. Lévy Bruhl. It is with him an essential point of difference between the perceptions of primitive men and ours that as far as regards the majority of objects with which we have to do our perceptions have shed, as it were, what he, not inappropriately, calls the "mystic" elements of emotion, which in primitive men are inseparably associated with the perceptions of any object, and that in the "collective representations" with which religion is concerned these mystic elements are *not* shed. I am not here prepared to defend the whole of M. Lévy Bruhl's statements on the subject. Wordsworth's Peter Bell, of whom it is said:—

> A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more,

surely represents a type of mental develop-

ment inferior to that exemplified in the poet himself, to whom—

> the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.[1]

But at least we may grant to M. Lévy Bruhl that primitive men, in their religion at any rate, were not like Peter Bell, and that the objects which they regarded as sacred were to them in a genuine sense mystical or mysterious. No doubt Wordsworth could distinguish, as (presumably) primitive man could not, the perception of the yellow primrose as just that and nothing more from his poetical apprehension of it as representative and symbolical of the power behind and below all life and all existence. And no doubt this very power of distinction which renders it possible to treat, when desirable, in a purely scientific and dispassionate manner an object which may also stir the profoundest emotions, may also conversely render the mystical or mysterious

[1] *Ode on Intimations of Immortality.*

element in our experience more mysterious, by detaching from it what is not mysterious. One is here treading on treacherous ground, for it is very hard—for you or for me or for the French sociologists—to be certain how far one has imaginatively realized the sentiments of savage or primitive man. Still, nothing that one reads of him seems to suggest that his religion has in it for him no element of the mysterious, though there is a good deal to suggest that the mysterious is for him less closely associated than it is for us, except in our more reflective moments, with the unprecedented or the very exceptional.

M. Durkheim's definition of Religion will then, we now understand, abstract from all that belongs especially to the higher religions, and will also contain no reference to mystery. It may seem that we ought not to quarrel with him on the former score, for plainly a definition of Religion (if such be possible) must apply to all religions, higher and lower alike. Yet, unless it is to be what may be

called a *minimum* definition, without any indication of the general tendency or direction of development (and without some such indication how can the nature of a thing that *does* evolve or develop be effectively described?), it ought surely to consider both whether the existence of the higher kind of religion may not reveal the presence of something in the lower kind from which presumably it has developed, just as the existence of the lower kind prevents us from taking all that we find in the higher as incapable of appearing in any other form than that which it there assumes. It would obviously be as inconsistent with the character of a *minimum* definition to include characteristics possessed by lower but not by higher religions as to include characteristics possessed by higher but not by lower. I think that there are good grounds (as we shall see when we come to the actual formula proposed by M. Durkheim) for doubting whether he has been as careful to avoid the former error as the latter,

and I even question whether he would not admit this, since (however this may agree with his statement elsewhere [1] that Religion is a permanent feature of human life) in framing this definition he has frankly adopted the view that in primitive religion we see what religion really is, and that where higher religion departs from the form of primitive religion, this is evisceration rather than evolution.

But the omission of all reference to mystery is perhaps more serious. "The sacred (*le sacré*)," says M. Durkheim, "is distinguished from the profane not simply in degree but in kind (*non simplement de grandeur, mais de qualité*)." This is quite true, but does "mystery" not enter into the notion of "the sacred"? However, when we come to the definition, despite this pronouncement, we hear nothing of *le sacré*,[2] and hence, at any rate, we

[1] *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*, xvii. (Nov. 1909), p. 733; *Elementary Forms*, Eng. tr., p. 2.

[2] This is not true of his later definition. See *E. F.*, Eng. tr., p. 47.

avoid the notorious circularity of M. Salomon Reinach's celebrated definition of Religion in his *Orpheus*[1] as "a collection of scruples which impede the free exercise of our faculties," which scruples turn out in his discussion to be, not *any* scruples, but those which arise from taboos—i.e. "sacred" or religious scruples.[2] I do not myself think, as I said, that any definition of Religion can be given which does not, by the use of some word implying that unique quality (as M. Durkheim puts it) which distinguishes the sacred from the profane, imply that its nature is already known.

M. Durkheim, however, himself gives us a definition of Religion (or rather of religious phenomena) which does not mention *le sacré* at all. It is this: *Les phénomènes dits religieux consistent en croyances obligatoires connexes de pratiques définies qui se rapportent à des objets donnés dans ces croy-*

[1] P. 4.

[2] Cp. *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 5.

*ances*." "The phenomena which we call religious are those which consist in obligatory beliefs connected with definite practices relating to objects given in these beliefs." I propose to devote some attention to the examination of this definition in order to see whether it really throws any light worth speaking of on the nature of that which it professes to define. We shall see afterwards that, having reached it, M. Durkheim finds himself compelled in the same article to add an appendix which very seriously modifies it. But for the present I confine myself to the definition as given above.

In the first place, we observe that there are two distinct kinds of phenomena to which the term "religious" may properly, according to M. Durkheim, be applied—*beliefs* and *practices*. In both cases only those beliefs and practices are religious which are obligatory; but, as he explains in the discussion which leads up to the establishment of his definition, not all obligatory beliefs are religious, nor all

obligatory practices, but only those obligatory beliefs to which practices are annexed and those obligatory practices which presuppose obligatory beliefs. We are given examples of obligatory beliefs which are not religious because no obligatory practices are connected with them, and also of obligatory practices which do not presuppose obligatory beliefs. It will repay us to examine these. I think we shall find as a result that here, as not unfrequently in the "sociology" of the authors we are considering, the whole appearance of exactness and precision imparted by the reiterated claim to be scientific, and the constant use of scientific and quasi-scientific language is no more than an illusory appearance. It vanishes on any attempt to probe the meaning of their most confident statements. Obligatory practices which are not connected with obligatory beliefs are those of "law and morality." No confusion (so M. Durkheim tells us) is possible of religious phenomena with these. This is at first sight a surprising

statement enough. One would have thought that such confusion was not only possible but had frequently occurred. Nevertheless I am quite of M. Durkheim's mind that Religion ought not to be confounded with either the one or the other, though not by any means on the grounds which M. Durkheim suggests.

Presumably M. Durkheim means that a society may require its members to obey the law or to observe certain rules of conduct without requiring them to hold any belief at all. Thus theoretical anarchism, or a belief that the conduct required by the community as moral is irrational and even undesirable, is freely tolerated in a modern State so long as the law is actually (for whatever motive) observed.

Now, it is very far from being as clear as M. Durkheim says that this fact differentiates law and morality from Religion. For it is surely the case, on the one hand, that in many communities—for example, to take well-known instances, in those of classical antiquity—there

was little objection taken to religious unbelief except so far as it was thought to tend to a neglect of religious practices (or an indulgence in irreligious practices) which might call down divine vengeance upon the State. As Professor Burnet well puts it:[1] "Ancient religion had properly no doctrine at all. . . . Nothing was required but that the ritual should be correctly performed, and the worshipper was free to give any explanation of it he pleased. It might be as exalted as that of Pindar and Sophokles, or as material as that of the itinerant mystery-mongers described by Plato in the *Republic*. The essential thing was that he should duly sacrifice his pig." It could hardly be said that the beliefs here were obligatory, so long as the practices were carried out. And, on the other hand, if it be said that these societies did put some pressure on belief, if less than on practice, can it be said that any society is *wholly* indifferent to the belief of its members in the sanctity of the

[1] *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 91.

law and morality which it enforces? Only so far as theoretical unbelief in the binding character of these is supposed likely to be without any practical result can it be said that any society would not discourage it. It is not easy to see on what grounds, except on that of anti-theological and anti-confessional prejudice—to invert the phraseology which he applies to others—M. Durkheim treats "law" and "morality" divorced from their primitive religious sanctions as obviously quite other than religious in character; while, wherever (as often in modern Europe and America) Religion assumes the character of an individual experience, verifying as the object of individual consciousness and rational reflection what was first given as the "collective representation" of a religious society, it is to be dismissed without ceremony as a mere echo of what can in its true nature have no significance except for the member of a particular group who has not yet achieved his independence as a citizen of the modern State.

As there are, according to M. Durkheim, obligatory practices which are not connected with obligatory beliefs, and which on this account are not entitled to be called religious, so he can point to obligatory beliefs which also, since they are not connected with obligatory practices, have no right to the name. These are beliefs in certain objects *laiques en apparence*—his instances are the flag, the country, the French Revolution, Joan of Arc—which can only be denied the name of religious by reference to the obligatory practices which are always connected with religious beliefs, while with these no such practices are connected. Could anything be more arbitrary, more (one may say) opportunist? Even supposing M. Durkheim to be ready to admit that these objects *laiques en apparence*, in which it is obligatory on Frenchmen to believe, would become genuinely religious if some kind of ritual expression of the public reverence for such objects were invented and imposed by legal or social pressure upon

Frenchmen, is it not plain that this would either prove the whole conception of the "religion" advanced by M. Durkheim to be to the last degree technical and superficial, or else would reveal the fact that (under the influence of considerations wholly relative to the political and ecclesiastical circumstances of contemporary France) he really identifies "religious" with "clerical," an identification already implied in his use of *laique*? It would be interesting to know how M. Durkheim would deal with the now annual commemoration of the "birthday of Rome," the observance of the ceremonies connected with which is considered as proof of loyalty to the present Italian State, and therefore, in the eyes of strict Vaticanists, of disloyalty to the Church. Here we have an object precisely of the sort, *laique en apparence*, in which, according to M. Durkheim, it is obligatory on the citizen to believe; and a practice obligatory in exactly the same sense is associated with it. It is therefore fully entitled, on M. Durkheim's

showing, to the title of "religious," while it remains as *laique en apparence* as ever. If, however, there is such a possibility (as there surely is) of such a *religion laique*, do not a great part of the assumptions implied in M. Durkheim's search for a definition of the "religious phenomenon" become quite irrelevant to the issue before him? In fact, the charge of confessional prejudice, which the writers of *L'Année Sociologique* are constantly bringing against English and American writers on comparative religion, may be retorted in their full force upon the editor of *L'Année Sociologique* himself. The *État laique* as an object of obligatory belief is constantly before him; and the absence of obligatory practices connected with this object is purely accidental and strictly comparable to the absence from the religious life of some modern men of a determinate "group" with whose collective representations it is connected.

Incidentally it is explained by M. Durkheim that our belief in science is not obli-

gatory because, although science (like religion) consists of representations and of collective representations, yet belief in it is regarded only as sensible (*sensé*), not as obligatory. Is this as fundamental a difference as M. Durkheim supposes? Would not evidence that a man did not believe in some of the more fundamental doctrines of arithmetic and geometry be considered a ground for treating him as insane or incapable of functioning as a member of society? and would not this be thought all the more justified if his disbelief were to lead him to practices—say in regard to money—based upon these arithmetical heresies? I am not contending, be it observed, that there is no distinction between our way of looking at disbelief in science and our way of looking at disbelief in religion: but only that M. Durkheim's definition of religious phenomena gives us no principle on which to distinguish them.

But we have not yet completed our study

of M. Durkheim's professed definition of the religious phenomenon. We know that the intention of the author is to give expression to a "group theory" of Religion. Yet in the definition no mention is made of a "group" at all. This may at first sight surprise us; but M. Durkheim goes on to tell us that "whatever is *obligatory* is of social origin. For an obligation implies a command, and consequently an authority which commands. We do not," he continues, "defer spontaneously to any orders unless they come from something more exalted than ourselves. But if one does not allow oneself to pass beyond the domain of experience, there is no moral power above the individual except that of the group to which he belongs. For empirical science the only thinking being which is greater than man is society." Hence to speak of the obligatory character of dogmas and rites is to speak of them as the product of the life of that group to which he belongs.

But who does not see that, if the "group theory" of religion is put forward (as in *L'Année Sociologique* it continually is) as a rival to any which would admit the possibility of a religious relation between the individual human soul and an objectively real God or divine order of being, this definition of the religious phenomenon is a glaring *petitio principii*? It is *assumed* that to recognize a divine imponent of obligation on the individual is to transcend the realm of experience; or, if it be said that "experience" is taken in a limited sense, then it is *assumed* that "experience" in this limited sense is coextensive with the real contents of the human mind. The recognition of an absolute obligation, such as is that of the categorical imperative of morality in Kant's philosophy, is *assumed* to be illusory. The question which at once occurs to the mind, "What is the obligation to obey the group?" is by implication and without argument treated as merely meaningless. A more arrogant dogmatism it would not be

possible to find in any "theological" or "confessional" treatise.

Whatever prejudices, however, empiricist or anti-clerical, may reign in the mind of M. Durkheim, he is not the man to deny a fact which stares him in the face within what he himself recognizes as the domain of experience. And accordingly, when confronted with the fact of the existence, even from the earliest stages of social development of which we know, of private rites, totems, and so forth, he meets it with an emendation of his definition by the addition to it of this note[1]: "*Subsidiairement,* in a secondary sense, one also classes as religious phenomena beliefs and practices which are optional, but which concern objects similar or assimilated to those already mentioned." This is surely the very bankruptcy of definition. In what respect are these objects similar or assimilated to the objects of public religion? Surely in their sacred or religious character, and only so;

[1] *L'A. S.*, ii. 28.

and in this case this character cannot even include that of being "obligatory" in the sense given by M. Durkheim to the word; for these beliefs and practices are expressly said to be *facultatifs*, and this word is obviously used as the antithesis of *obligatoires*. I should myself be prepared to admit that these private beliefs, rites, etc., are regarded as obligatory by those who hold or practise them; but then I think the group theory of obligation at the most an account of the history of its development, and not an explanation of its nature. Nor do I complain of M. Durkheim for failing to define Religion satisfactorily, but only for claiming to have done so. I do not myself believe that Religion *can* be defined. We all know what we mean by holding a thing to be sacred (though we may not all regard the same things as sacred) better than any definition can tell us, as we all know what we mean by calling things beautiful (though we do not all agree in what we think beautiful) better than any definition

of beauty can tell us. But on this point I have dwelt elsewhere,[1] and will not enlarge upon it further here.[2]

[1] See *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 4.

[2] M. Durkheim's later definition of religion runs thus (*Elementary Forms*, Eng. tr., p. 47): "*A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them.*" This new definition seems to be exposed, as regards the explanation of "sacred," to the charge of circularity already brought above against that of M. Salomon Reinach in his *Orpheus*. The note of *obligatoriness*, so much insisted upon in the earlier definition, no longer appears; because, as we are told, "this obligation evidently comes from the fact that these beliefs are the possession of a group which imposes them upon its members." It is hard to see in what way the new definition is (as it claims to be) less "formal" and more regardful of the "contents of the religious representations" than its predecessor.

## CHAPTER IV

### CRITICISM OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY OF RELIGION

AFTER these attempts to probe here and there the generalizations of M. Durkheim and his collaborators, we shall perhaps be prepared for the conclusion that their theory of Religion is by no means satisfactory. The fact that it was the existence of private religious beliefs and practices, even among the primitive societies to which he looks by choice for light on the nature of Religion, which led M. Durkheim to spoil his definition by a note appended, is significant of the weakness of the French sociologists in dealing with Religion as it exists in the individual, when once he has come to realize the possibility of a divergence between his own beliefs (or, if the word

be preferred, representations) and those of the group to which he notwithstanding acknowledges himself to belong.

The French sociologists have, indeed, done a service to the philosophy of religion by insisting on the evidence borne by history to the social character of religion. I find myself often in sympathy with them in certain criticisms which they are led by their point of view to make on some philosophical and psychological accounts of religion which abstract unduly from the historical facts of religious development. I should agree with M. Mauss [1] that sometimes the orthodox have preserved better than liberal theologians of the type of Auguste Sabatier what he calls "the sense of necessities inherent in all religion." The combined influence of two traditions has often, no doubt, distracted the minds of thinkers who have occupied themselves with this subject from the intimate historical connection between social conditions

[1] *L'A. S.*, vii. 201.

and religious faith and practice, which a keener appreciation of the importance of the institutional element in religion would have helped them to detect. One of these is the tradition of the deistic Natural Theology associated with the abstract rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and the other is the Protestant tradition of insistence on private judgment and individual faith, of appeal from the visible Church (an actually existing group) to an invisible or ideal Church nowhere actually to be found on earth.[1] Again, M. Mauss is not alone among critics of William James's celebrated lectures on the *Varieties of Religious Experience* in recognizing[2] that his purview was exclusively that of the American Protestant of the conversionist type (if I may coin this expression), and that he was thus, without fully recognizing it, dealing rather with the religious experience of a particular group

[1] Cp. *Studies in the History of Natural Theology*, p. 346.

[2] *L'A. S.*, vii. 209.

than with religious experience in general. I should even go with the French sociologists in holding that one has, at any rate primarily, to do, not with *religion* in general at all, but rather with *religions*. Of course they themselves are continually generalizing about religion, and when M. Hubert impatiently exclaims [1] in a review of Miss Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, "Would to Heaven they [the anthropologists] would abstain from generalizing!" one would even gather that generalization was a privilege reserved, in his view, for orthodox sociologists of the group whose high priest is M. Durkheim. But I should agree with them that we must begin with Religions in order to discover what Religion is, and that we should not make it the sole or main object of our study of Religions to abstract the common element in them.

I should differ, however, from what I suppose would be the view at any rate

[1] *L'A. S.*, viii. 276.

of most of them, that there is no possibility of there coming into being a universal religious fellowship, a human group with a human religion, just as there is already in existence a universal scientific fellowship; because, at the stage of mental development at which the universal scientific fellowship becomes possible, Religion, in any sense which can properly bear the same name as the historical religions of the world, can only exist as a "survival," with no real place of its own in the "lay" civilization of the future, except presumably as the subject of art and poetry, which are admittedly imaginative and not realistic.

While agreeing with the French sociologists to the extent which I have described in their criticism of any tendency, whether in the philosophy or in the psychology of religion, towards neglect of the facts of the historical development of religion, or towards ignoring the close correlation which exists between the content of any religious experience (we may be allowed, for the nonce, the use of this

expression), and the society to which the subject of that experience belongs or has belonged, I must here observe that it would be a serious error to impute such a tendency to all the chief representatives of the Philosophy of Religion in Europe during the past hundred years. The Hegelian philosophy of religion sees in the history of Religion the process of the divine self-revelation, and in every god the spirit of the community which worships it.

And if we turn to the schools of thought that owe their origin to the reaction against Hegelianism which took place in Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century, we shall find the Ritschlians pushing even to exaggeration the doctrine of the dependence of personal religion on the religious community. This characteristic of Ritschlianism may be seen in an extreme form in a book by Professor Wilhelm Hermann, well known to students of religious thought in England, and translated into our language under the title of *The*

*Communion of the Christian with God*. For Professor Hermann, while he does not deny that there is communion with God outside of Christianity, does deny that we can possibly enter into the religious life of non-Christians. Only through the community to which we belong (i.e., in the case of Christians, through the Christian Church) is such communion [1] possible or really intelligible to us. Even into the religious life of a pious Israelite the writer tells us we cannot enter fully, because an Israelite was in a relation of communion with God as belonging to a particular nation which was God's people. Hence he (not we) "was able to grasp as revelations of God those features in the course of Hebrew history which he did so apprehend." "Our position," he says again, "is different; we stand in such historical relations that Jesus Christ alone can be grasped by us as the fact in which God reveals himself. . . . The knowledge of God and the religion which have

[1] *Communion with God*, p. 62.

been and which are possible to men placed in other historical conditions are impossible to us." As to the savages of Australia, we do not even (according to Professor Hermann) know through what medium comes to them any knowledge of and communion with God that they may enjoy. This doctrine, at any rate—and it only carries out a principle inherent in the Ritschlian philosophy of religion—is as thoroughgoing a "group theory" of religion as the most ardent of the French sociologists could desire. The objection I should make to it, as to the doctrine of the French sociologists themselves, is that it ignores the claim to universal validity and objectivity which (as I should say) it is the very nature of the human mind to make for its apprehensions. No doubt the assertion of the sociologists that they can study Religion apart from any sharing, even by way of sympathy, of the religious sentiments of any group, does implicitly make that claim. But it does it at the expense of

denying to the properly religious elements in Religion any rational justification. The aims of religious groups, so far as they are rational, would be better attained by "lay"—that is, non-religious—science and art. The suggestion by any writer (as by Mr. Morris Jastrow or by William James) of the need in a student of Religion of some sympathy with religious sentiments is apt to be sternly repudiated by the reviewers in *L'Année Sociologique*.[1] Renan[2] thought, indeed, that the historian of a religion should not be a believer at the time of writing; but that he should have been a believer (as he himself had been in respect of Christianity) he regarded as an advantage. The sociologists, or some of them, would prefer that the historian of Religion should never have believed. Now, I do not wish to deny that a man without ever having entertained religious sentiments may make valuable contributions to the knowledge of the history

[1] See *L'A. S.*, vi. 167; vii. 206.

[2] *Vie de Jésus*, Introd.

of Religion, but I find it as difficult to think that a complete stranger to such sentiments is the ideal historian of Religion as to suppose the lack of any musical taste a qualification for writing the history of Music. Such facts, indeed, as those relating to the development of the musical bow from the bow used as a weapon might very well be traced out by a wholly unmusical person; but such a discussion is only accessory to the real history of Music itself.

The French sociologists' distrust of metaphysics has, I think, deterred them from a sufficiently thorough examination, philosophical as well as historical, of the relation of the human individual to the community of which he is a member. The lack of this has produced an undeniable vagueness as to the place of "collective representations" in science.

## CHAPTER V

## THE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF CATEGORIES

We will now turn our attention to this subject, which will be found to lead naturally to that which we set out to consider, the bearing of the group theory of Religion on the view to be taken of Religion as it exists in the individual who has reached a stage at which he can contrast his own interest with that of his group.

The French sociologists are prepared to suggest that a new epistemology or theory of knowledge may be based upon their sociological researches. Those objects or forms (we should call them one or the other, according as our view is, in Kant's phraseology, "dogmatic" or "critical") of percep-

tion and thought, such as time, space, cause, substance, and so forth, which seem to impose themselves upon our minds as necessary conceptions, with which we cannot dispense, may perhaps be traced back to "collective representations," which, having imposed themselves, like all other products of collective thinking, upon individual members of human groups in the long distant past, exercised over those who first began to think for themselves an influence of the same sort as that which religious representations exercise, and were thus taken for granted from the first in the history of independent thinking, of philosophy and science. Readers of Mr. Cornford's book *From Religion to Philosophy* will here recognize a thought which, as applied to the history of Greek speculation, is the theme of that work, to which I shall make some further reference hereafter.

Without wishing to deny the interest and importance for what may be called the history of ideas of much that the observation

of primitive men has brought to light respecting their modes of envisaging the course of time, the disposition of the world in space, or the constitution of the universe, it may be doubted whether anthropologists or sociologists have not in respect of it yielded to a temptation, noted by Bacon [1] as apt to beset scientific investigators, of trying to explain everything in the universe from the point of view of their special studies. In dealing with this subject I shall, in the first place, point out in what way it seems to me that the fact on which the French sociologists rely, when they talk of the categories having a religious origin, may really throw light upon the origin of some of the phraseology which we employ in philosophy and in science. Next I shall indicate the reasons which lead me to disagree with the suggestion that these facts can help us to solve the real problems of logic and epistemology. Lastly I shall advert to the treatment of the matter in the

[1] *Nov. Org.* i. § 54.

article by M. Durkheim in the *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*,[1] to which I have already several times referred, a treatment which seems to conduct us in a direction more hopeful than that taken by some of his collaborators. Pursuing the direction which our discussion of M. Durkheim will indicate, we shall, I think, find ourselves approximating to a philosophical theory of a very different character to that which dominates the minds of the writers in *L'Année Sociologique*, but which may without absurdity be also called a "group theory of religion," namely, a "philosophy of loyalty," such as is expounded by Professor Royce in his recent lectures on the *Problem of Christianity*.

The fundamental principle of the doctrine or doctrines we have now to discuss is stated by Messrs. Durkheim and Mauss in an article on *Classifications primitives*[2] in these words:

[1] Now the Introduction to *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

[2] *L'A. S.*, vi. 68.

"Thus the logical hierarchy is but an aspect of the social hierarchy, and the unity of thought is nothing else than the unity of the collective life of a society (*de la collectivité*) extended to the universe. . . . Logical relations are thus in a sense domestic relations."

What does this mean? What it means is, I think, no more than this (but no doubt this is a fact of very high interest and importance), that when man begins to concern himself with the universe—and it is the fundamental mark of human intelligence that it does so concern itself, that it forms the conceptions of an all-including whole, and looks upon the incidents of the man's own life, as it were, against the background of such an all-including whole—it is from the point of view of his society, his "group." The consciousness of the world, as we may put it, is mediated to him through the consciousness of his group. It is in becoming aware of himself as a member of a group,

as living in it a life which he distinguishes from his individual life as larger, more permanent, more sacred, that he starts out on the way that will eventually lead him on to the adventures of science and of philosophy. In the pursuit of these adventures he will scan afar off horizons which he knows that not only he but his group, even when it has become no paltry tribe but embraces the whole race of mankind, has never taken for their inheritance. But at first, and even for a very long time, he does not realize this. Hence he supposes (as we are told) that the different quarters of the heavens belong, as it were, to that division of his people which is encamped towards it. Whatsoever sort of thing he has to do with, animal, plant, star, and so forth, he divides into classes according to the tribes of his people.

We are reminded of the words of a writer belonging to a far more advanced stage of development than the Australian black-

fellows, whose customary phraseology has been the main evidence alleged for this habit of the primitive mind. It is the poet of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy who says: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask thy father and he will shew thee; thine elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the children of men, he set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel."[1] It would be easy to produce examples of the same habit persisting in quarters nearer at hand. In imagination (though we know it to be only in imagination) we associate the constellation of the Southern Cross with the folk who nightly look upon it, and we feel a sense of natural proprietorship in the weather of our native land. A late well-known musician was wont to amuse his friends by classifying everything in heaven and earth as "Oxford" or

[1] Deut. xxxii. 7, 8.

"Cambridge." This was on his part, of course, a deliberate joke, but a joke in which there was an echo of a habit which no doubt influenced many generations of men in their choice of principles on which to class the "number of things" of which, like the child in Stevenson's poem,[1] they found the world to be full. Such terms of our own language as "genus" and "kind" obviously imply the extension of what MM. Durkheim and Mauss call "domestic relations" to the most universal purposes of logical science.

But to what does all this come? In the first place we must notice that that fundamental characteristic of the human mind, its apprehension (however vague and indeterminate) of an "all," a whole, a universe, is *presupposed* in this mapping of *it* out on the principles of the social organization of those who so map it out. In the second place, the consciousness of the social organization

[1] *A Child's Garden of Verses: Happy Thought.*

itself as such,[1] already involves the presence of a reason which distinguishes and relates, or, if we prefer that language, which apprehends distinctions and relations. The logical classification could not have been modelled on the social, had not the principle of classification already been present and applied to the consideration of the group itself. Hence what sociology can explain is not why we use categories—meaning by that word "principles of classification of universal application"—but why certain particular principles of classification were first hit upon rather than others.

It may, of course, be contended without absurdity, or rather with some antecedent probability, that principles of classification once chosen for reasons connected rather with the traditions of the first classifiers than

[1] I do not say the *existence* of the social organization itself, for there may, I suppose, be differentiation of function in a species, due to the action of natural selection, without any social consciousness, properly so-called, arising.

with the nature of the things classified may, in consequence of the pressure exerted by habit and tradition, have in some cases persisted longer than their intrinsic merits deserved. But to contend, as Mr. Cornford, for example, in effect contends, in his book already mentioned, called *From Religion to Philosophy*, that this sort of traditional persistence is the true key to the history of Greek Religion and Philosophy is not only to refuse to see in Religion a genuine form of experience (for this Mr. Cornford would probably decline to do); it is also to see in Philosophy no genuine knowledge, but only a play of the imagination with ideas which had become associated together on principles in the last resort irrational or at least purely subjective. Perhaps Mr. Cornford would not shrink from this position either; but if so, it should be clearly understood that the title *From Religion to Philosophy* involves a charge of bastardy against Philosophy, which is to be proved no offspring of Reason at

all, but the natural child of the collective hallucination which is called Religion. But, as a study of the sociological epistemology which lies behind Mr. Cornford's speculations abundantly shows, the difficulty is to be sure even of the parentage of Science itself; and if Science, too, turns out to have no right to claim Reason as the author of its being, we shall have to admit that Reason, if indeed not itself a purely mythical being, at least has left no descendants alive among us to-day.

The object of what we are agreed nowadays to call Science—though whether Plato would have allowed much of it to be entitled to the name is very doubtful—is the world in time and space. It is admitted by MM. Hubert and Mauss that time and space are given in the individual consciousness;[1] although they are also objects of collective representations, for space is (as we have seen) mapped out and the measurements of time

[1] *L'A. S.*, vii. 119.

chosen and consecrated by social or religious authority. But Science is not concerned with empty time or space; it is concerned with the substance extended in space, and with the changes of this substance which take place in time. It is difficult to understand how it can dispense with that assumption of the real existence and unity of this substance which we express by speaking of it all at once as "Nature." But in the disguise of this notion of Nature, the φύσις of the Greek philosophers, MM. Hubert and Mauss detect an older conception, familiar to anthropologists as *mana* or *orenda*, a conception which, according to them, differs from the notion of time and space "given" in the individual consciousness, by belonging only to collective thought. It has, we are told,[1] no *raison d'être* outside society, and none therefore for "pure reason," which it is thus taken for granted (it is very doubtful, as we shall see, how far M.

[1] *L'A. S.*, vii. 122.

Durkheim would here agree with his collaborators [1]) is something merely individual.

I am convinced that this attempt to make "pure reason" something merely individual, and to deny objective value to what our sociologists call "collective representations," just because they are collective and not individual, is fundamentally mistaken. I shall, however, expend the less criticism upon it here because it seems to me that the editor of *L'Année Sociologique*, M. Durkheim himself, has given it up in the article before mentioned, which he contributed to the *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*, to serve as an Introduction to his work on the various forms of the religious consciousness.[2] It repeats what I suppose to be the error in Comte's law of

[1] See *E. F.*, Eng. tr., p. 438. "We take it as an axiom that religious beliefs, howsoever strange their appearance may be at times, contain a truth which must be discovered." Thus we see how far it is from being true that a conception lacks objective value merely because it has a social origin.

[2] The concluding chapter of this work, now complete, confirms the impression made upon me by the Introduction.

the three stages; for, so far as that law represents what we commonly call science as differentiating itself first, along with metaphysic, from theology, and then from metaphysic also, it represents on the whole correctly the course of development; but when it regards the elements of human consciousness thus dissociated from science as having no relatively independent development of their own, it fails to do justice to the problem before us; although, as a matter of fact, Comte, by the construction of a positive philosophy reinstated metaphysic (for only by a metaphysic can the possibility of metaphysic be denied), and again by his creation of the Church of Humanity went on to reinstate religion also—and thereby allowed, not merely the persistence, but the ultimate redintegration with "science" of the other forms of human consciousness, from which, in achieving its own liberty and independence, it was compelled for a while to sever itself.

One may go farther: this identification of

the rational with the merely abstractedly individual is so much out of harmony with the very insistence on the importance of the group-consciousness which is the main theme of the French sociologists, that their combination in one theory is only rendered possible by means of the doctrine [1] advanced in M. Lévy Bruhl's book on *The Mental Functions in Societies of the Lower Culture* of a profound unlikeness between the processes of the primitive and of the civilized human mind; a doctrine which we have already had occasion to consider, but of which we will now undertake a more detailed investigation.

[1] From which M. Durkheim has explicitly dissociated himself in his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. See Eng. tr., p. 439.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE THEORY OF PRELOGICAL MENTALITY

OUR previous criticism of M. Lévy Bruhl's theory consisted in an examination of the contrast which he institutes between the Law of Participation, which was, according to him, the grand principle of primitive thinking, and the Law of Contradiction, which—also according to him—takes its place in the minds of civilized men. We saw reason to think that both laws were misinterpreted by M. Lévy Bruhl, and their relation misconceived. I will now go on to consider some of the more detailed statements brought forward in his book to support the theory which rests upon this contrast of two rival principles. I hope to show that M. Lévy Bruhl greatly exaggerates the diversity of the primitive and

the civilized mind, when, instead of merely pointing out how primitive thought is hampered by imperfection of knowledge, by lack of encouragement to individual initiative, by want of practice in that art of detecting differences between things which are *prima facie* alike or habitually associated, in which Aristotle[1] recognizes the hall-mark of intellectual superiority, he would persuade us that the mind actually works in different ways in primitive and in civilized humanity.

M. Lévy Bruhl tells us[2] that what he calls *la mentalité prélogique*, the process of thinking which goes on in men's minds who belong to "societies of the lower culture," and have not yet come to reason in accordance with the Principle of Contradiction—this "prelogical mentality" is, so he says, "synthetic in essence, in the sense that the syntheses which constitute it do not, like those which are effected by logical thought, imply previous

[1] *Eth. Nic.*, x. 1, 1172*b* 3.

[2] *Les Fonctions Mentales*, etc., p. 114.

acts of analysis, the results of which are registered in the form of concepts. In other words, the principles of connexion between the representations are there given, generally speaking, along with the representations themselves. The syntheses in this sphere appear as primitive and as nearly always unanalysed and unanalysable (*indécomposées et indécomposables*). Put into different language this means that primitive men, in perceiving objects, perceive not what we should perceive in their place—a yellow primrose, for example (to recall the instance of Peter Bell), but something which possesses, along with the colour and shape and texture of the flower, all sorts of characteristics which would not exist for us, characteristics which are what M. Lévy Bruhl chooses to call "mystical," which stir the emotions of the beholder, since they connect what he sees with the life of the group to which he belongs. In this respect the primitive beholder of the primrose is, it would seem, in the same position as the

English Conservative, in whom the primrose may also arouse political emotion, owing to its association with a departed political leader of his party, and with a league founded in his memory to promote the party's interests. But M. Lévy Bruhl would, no doubt, point out to us that the English Conservative does not fail to distinguish what he actually sees from the political organization of which it reminds him ; while, if we accept for a moment M. Lévy Bruhl's claim to read the thoughts of the primitive man (despite their vast unlikeness to his own), the primitive man makes no such distinction ; all the special relations in which his group suppose the primrose to stand to them—it is, let us suppose, their totem—seem to him to be there before his eyes as much as the colour and texture and shape which are all that the disillusioned sight of a civilized man (such as Peter Bell) can detect, although, like Hamlet's mother, he could say with conviction " All that is, I see." [1]

[1] *Hamlet*, III. 4. 132.

According to M. Lévy Bruhl's theory the English Conservative is enabled, despite the emotions aroused in him by the sight of the primrose, to distinguish the objective fact of the primrose from its political associations, because he has somehow acquired the power, which his primitive ancestors presumably did not possess, of isolating the concept "primrose" from the context in which the particular instance of a primrose before him is perceived by him. He can then go on to connect or synthesize this concept of "primrose" (itself, as we have seen, the result of an analysis) with the similarly abstract concept of "dog-violet" as two flowers which love the same kind of soil, and are usually found growing together. This will thus be a *logical* synthesis of quite a different sort from that which the primitive man had given him in his very perception of the flower which connected it with his totem-kin. But surely the language here employed is very misleading. No doubt our imagined savage, whose totem

is the primrose, and who had always thought of himself as one of the Primrose-kin, will not be able without an effort (which would very likely be beyond his mental capacity) to see the primrose without the emotion proper to the beholding of one's totem. The very notion of making an attempt to do so, even of the possibility of such an attempt, may never enter into his mind. Nay, if suggested to him, the thought might be repudiated as sacrilegious. But, after all, he knows that there are other men whose totem is not the primrose, and that their totem is—let us say—the dog-violet, which rouses in him no such emotions. Why is M. Lévy Bruhl sure that the operation of distinguishing that which Primrose men and Dog-violet men would alike see in the primrose from that which Primrose men see in it and Dog-violet men do not, is something belonging to a quite different "mentality" from that of the primitive man, to whom (as to many men at a higher level of culture, who never think of dispassionately

comparing their religion or their country with other people's), it does not occur to attempt the performance of the operation for himself. Is individual reluctance or even inability to perform certain mental operations enough to constitute a difference of mentality, in M. Lévy Bruhl's sense? If so, should not many of us have to admit our "mentality" to be quite different from that of men who can and do perform mathematical operations, of which we are individually incapable, and which it would never occur to us to undertake?

Surely the whole attempt to fix a great gulf between primitive and civilized, "prelogical" and "logical" mentality is mistaken. M. Lévy Bruhl has to admit that, in fact, the "prelogical mentality" persists in civilized man, alongside of the "logical." Rather, from the first the human mind has possessed its *differentia* of rationality, its ideal of objective and universally valid truth—not, of course, as a consciously contemplated ideal, but as an impulse continually at work,

producing attempts at analysis and at synthesis, in which, no doubt, things have often been wrongly connected and wrongly disconnected, and throughout which there has been a continual pressure of the social environment on the individual mind, determining the direction of its attention. The existence of a social environment is itself the means by which the individual mind becomes properly a *mind*, something which transcends the life of sense and is potentially universal—or in Hamlet's words:

> . . . with such large discourse
> Looking before and after . . . [1]

—concerning itself in principle with the *all*, the universe. For even while its interest seems bounded by that of its tribe, yet its tribe is, in a real sense, a universe to it [2]; and this is just

[1] *Hamlet*, IV. 4. 36, 37.

[2] Cp. M. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, Eng. tr., p. 442 *n.*: "At bottom the concept of totality, that of society and that of divinity, are very probably only different aspects of the same notion."

where the truth of our author's doctrine, that the "categories"—the principles used for universal classification—are in their primeval form derived from social or tribal arrangements, really comes in. They are principles used for universal classification from the first, although they were principles suggested by tribal arrangements. This is hardly realized by M. Lévy Bruhl; and so elsewhere, when he hints[1] that the "efficient cause" of philosophers is a sort of abstract precipitate of the "mystic power" attributed to spirits—the belief in which he is probably right in supposing less primitive than it is represented as being in the "animistic" hypothesis of Sir Edward Tylor—he does not realize that "a mystic *power*" already implies what in more technical language is called "efficient causality."

It is, of course, quite possible that men may have gone wrong in assuming that "efficient causality" must always be of the

[1] P. 17.

sort to which their attention was first attracted. In one section of his book M. Lévy Bruhl has a very interesting discussion of the primitive man's attitude towards numbers; but the discussion would really be improved were it disembarrassed of the obligation which the author feels laid upon him to distinguish as sharply as possible primitive from civilized mentality. Indeed, when he observes:[1] "The earliest numbers—up to ten or twelve about—which are familiar to the prelogical and mystical mentality, participate in the nature of that mentality, and have only very slowly become numbers purely arithmetical: perhaps there is even now no society where there are no more than this, except in the eyes of mathematicians," he admits more than is really compatible with his doctrine. For, as he goes on to say, while the higher numbers with which primitive men do not concern themselves, and which have never been attended to except by civilized arithme-

[1] P. 237.

ticians, statisticians, or financiers, have no other significance for us than the properly numerical, these earlier numbers—the numbers up to ten or twelve—have been enveloped along with their names in the collective representations of the prelogical mentality, or, to put it more simply, have acquired traditional associations of very long standing, which cause their names to suggest to us these associations over and above their places in the numerical series. Thus civilized men, so far as they are not engaged in purely mathematical calculation, are still influenced by these associations, and, on the other hand, the attention paid by primitive men to numbers as distinct from things numbered, even though this attention may be concentrated on certain numbers recommended by associations with the life of their group, is surely already a recognition of that which is the subject-matter of Arithmetic, and the first step taken towards the foundation of that science. There is no need to talk of "prelogical" or

"logical" here; neither word has any real application. M. Lévy Bruhl's prejudice in favour of this illusory antithesis leads him more than once to put aside as inadequate the word "infantine," as descriptive of "primitive mentality." Nowhere does he illustrate, as he might profitably have done, the processes of primitive thought from those of the infantine mind, some of which we can, most of us, remember. Commenting[1] on a writer—Dr. Conant—who finds it hard to understand why not only the number *five*, so naturally suggested by the number of the fingers of each of our hands, but many other numbers, are taken by various peoples as the basis of numeration—and who is, it seems, specially puzzled by the use for this purpose in more than one instance of the number *four*, M. Lévy Bruhl says that this is "*une énigme artificielle*" because in primitive societies considerations of the kind which he is pleased to call "mystical" determine these matters, and

[1] *Les Fonctions Mentales*, etc., p. 231.

not such considerations of convenience as appeal to us to-day. This is probably true enough; and in the same way considerations, not of convenience but of association and even of fantasy, determine children of an imaginative turn in like cases. I remember myself as a child fixing on this very number *four*, which puzzles Dr. Conant, as a private sacred number for myself. I wanted to have one which was different from three or seven —acknowledged by my family to have sacred associations—and which should be my very own. I was accustomed, if allowed to ring the bell for breakfast, to ring it *four* times and with a pause after the *fourth* time; and the habit of using *four* in this sort of way has not wholly deserted me yet. But, even when I chose *four* for my own special number, I did not suppose that for purposes of arithmetic pure and simple it was in a privileged position. I was perfectly well able to count, and quite familiar with the multiplication table; but I was more interested, as pre-

sumably primitive men are, in numbers that had associations of their own, even of a self-chosen and arbitrary kind, such as that which the number four had for me. Still, it was an interest in *numbers*, and this must not be forgotten when dwelling on the mathematical irrelevance of the associations sometimes connected with particular numbers.

Nor is there anything illogical in being specially interested in a number which happens to be the number of something in which we are specially interested. Where, moreover, the number seems to belong to the intrinsic nature of the thing—and that a thing which seems (as in the case of the three dimensions of space or of past, present, and future) to be one of the fundamental features of the world in which we find ourselves—then it might, perhaps, so far from being distinctly logical, even be called unphilosophical to pay no special attention to that number on that account.

The suspicion which these considerations

may have aroused that M. Lévy Bruhl's emphasis on the difference between the mental functions in primitive and in civilized man respectively is excessive and disproportionate will be, I think, confirmed by the following criticism of detailed statements on the subject to be found in his book. It is, perhaps, possible to exaggerate the importance of the law of parsimony in framing hypotheses; but such contempt for it as is shown by M. Lévy Bruhl is surely out of place. Over and over again he dismisses as inapplicable the most obvious interpretation of the words and deeds of primitive men, just because it assumes an identity of mental function in them and in us. But it is plain that this kind of reasoning is much in peril of committing the fault of *petitio principii*, and incurring itself that charge of indifference to the rules of civilized logic which M. Lévy Bruhl brings against the thinking of those of whom it treats. It is true that M. Lévy Bruhl's readiness to admit the existence of a "prelogical"

and "irrational" element in the thinking of civilized men may suggest a possible evasion of the inferences we might otherwise be inclined to draw from parallels between our own behaviour and that of primitive men. Yet the multiplication of these will throw doubt upon the sharp contrast between two kinds of mental functions which is drawn by our author, and gives a title to his book; and it will make us less afraid than M. Lévy Bruhl would have us be to interpret the conduct of our primitive—as of other—fellow-men by analogy with our own under more or less similar circumstances.

Why should it be necessary to talk of a different sort of perception in primitive men from ours, in order to explain their tendency to treat images or pictures of things as though they were the originals? We are not allowed by M. Lévy Bruhl[1] to speak here of a "*confusion enfantine*"; yet is not a child's terror of a picture

[1] *Les Fonctions Mentales*, etc., p. 45.

representing something which, if seen, would frighten him, a terror not altogether allayed by the knowledge that it is only a picture, the real key to the primitive state of mind? Do not associations (not only "traditional associations"—though the theory of the French sociologists may even require, in the case of primitive men, that they must be traditional—but associations of various kinds) affect our attitude, even in mature life, towards pictures and images? Should we not hesitate to use the picture of one we greatly reverenced or loved as a target on which to practise shooting? True, we should not think, as a primitive man might think, that our arrows or bullets would injure the original of the picture; and therefore even the most malignant among us do not practise the rite, known throughout the world, and called in French *envoûtement*, of making waxen images of our enemies, by sticking pins into the heart of which we may destroy the enemy they represent. No doubt this rite (for practising which against her

husband's nephew, King Henry VI, Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester, was condemned in 1441 to lifelong imprisonment) seems to us highly irrational, because we understand much better than those who practised or practise it the actual connexions which exist between material things; but without this better understanding the proceedings of the operator of wireless telegraphy would seem no less irrational.

To explain the primitive attitude towards images, we require surely no real difference in mental functions between the primitive man and the civilized. We suppose the primitive man to feel as we feel about a picture or like memorial of one to whom our feelings of some kind are strong, so that we love or, on the other hand, cannot bear to look at it. But we know, as he does not, that the fact of it exciting in us the feelings which the original would excite, so that we should often shrink from doing to it what we should shrink from doing to the original, or again, might

do to it what we should do to the original (kiss it, for example, or curse it), does not carry with it the consequence that the same effect would be produced on the original as on the picture by what we do to the picture. But there is really nothing odd in guessing, before experience proved the contrary, that it might be so. I do not, of course, deny that we do draw a distinction between action which seems to us to be "mystical" (the name, if not free from objection, may pass) and action which, however surprising, is understood to be "natural." I think, however, that the distinction is in principle drawn both by primitive man and by civilized. I believe that it rests upon a real distinction within our experience; and that though it is probably true that the habits of thought of primitive man lead him to look for "mystical" action where there is only "natural," while those of men civilized after our fashion lead us to see only "natural" where there must be "mystical," yet this contrast in our habits

of mind does not warrant the assertion of M. Lévy Bruhl that there is a real difference of mental function between the two groups of men.

I must state more explicitly the view I have hinted at; it would, however, take us out of our way if I were to dwell on it for more than a very brief space. But I think I can make it plain most easily if I start from the question, now so often asked: "Is there such a thing as telepathy?"

It is not easy to say precisely what is meant by telepathy; but perhaps one may put it that it is usually taken to mean an effect produced in the mind of one person by the mind of another, where the persons concerned are too far apart in space to be perceptible to one another's senses, and where no material medium external to their own bodies (such as an electric current, or a written paper conveyed from one to the other) is employed in the communication. It does not seem to belong to the usual notion of telepathy

that the communication should be intentionally or even consciously made. On the other hand, it does seem to be required that the communication should be quite or almost instantaneous.[1]

Now, I shall not presume to say what is the correct answer to the question as to the existence of telepathy in this sense; for I do not know. But I think that the question is frequently asked, not from mere curiosity, but because it is supposed that the proof of the real occurrence of such telepathy would deal materialism its death-blow. Many men are strongly predisposed to admit its existence, and others as strongly predisposed to deny it, just because they are alike convinced that the result of admitting it would be to admit that materialism was untenable.

Now I do not feel so sure that this would be the result. The real test of the adequacy of materialism is its power of explaining, not comparatively rare phenomena, such as

[1] Thus telepathy would scarcely be alleged as an adequate explanation of prophetic second sight.

on any showing are those which could be described as telepathy in the ordinary sense, but the everyday phenomena of a conversation between two friends. If materialism can *wholly* explain that, I do not know why it should not explain what is called "telepathy." The *rapport* (I know of no English word equally convenient for my purpose) which exists between two persons who converse together is to my mind something which, while absolutely necessary to real conversation, in which there is what we call genuine personal intercourse and mutual influence, is by no means accounted for by cerebral and nervous processes and the visual and auditory consciousness which accompanies them. It is, no doubt, true that materialism cannot account for consciousness at all; but even if we should allow that it could admit sense-perception as the *de facto* result of the organization of matter to a certain kind and degree of complexity, the *rapport* of which I have spoken would still have to be

explained. On the other hand, if materialism is not confuted by the fact of conversation, it need not be confuted by the existence of telepathy in the usual sense of the word. In some alleged cases of telepathy the recipient of the telepathic communication is said at least to "see" or "hear" something; and there must presumably thus be some kind of material process going on in his brain and his sensory nerves, such as would be anyhow admitted on all hands to take place in the case of a pure hallucination. Even a man's sudden recollection of an absent friend, which is sometimes all that is asserted to occur, cannot be supposed to involve no modification in the brain. In the same way, the remembrance of the person to whom the communication is made, or the wish for his presence in the other party's mind, we must also suppose to be, like other memories or wishes, conditioned by some kind of cerebral change. So far as I can see, we are actually familiar both with the mutual communication

of minds and with the mutual contact of bodies. The former is far more intimately interesting to us, but it only takes place between minds or beings with minds; and, according to the view now most commonly held among us, there are in our environment many fewer minds than bodies. Primitive men did not think that this was so; they tended to suppose the mutual communication of minds the normal type of event; hence they often supposed that beings which have not or are not minds were capable of affecting us as only minds do, and conversely that they could affect them as we can only affect beings with minds capable of mutual communication with ours.

I do not, of course, suggest that primitive man expressed it in terms of this sort, or that he thought of minds and bodies as distinguished in the way in which we distinguish them. It is just the very point we are insisting upon that he did not. He was aware of two kinds of causality, which we may call,

if we please, "mystical" and "physical"—if we only remember that the former is just as well seen in everyday personal intercourse as in the stories of the occult or miraculous, and therefore remains a fact of experience, though all these stories should turn out to be false; and if we remember also that "physical" is used in a conventional sense, and that the other kind of causality belongs also to the nature of things. In the indistinctness of primitive men's notions as to what kinds of being could exhibit or be affected by the different sorts of causality respectively lies the secret of those primitive beliefs which M. Lévy Bruhl thinks must imply a different sort of mentality to ours. But we are still learning daily more and more about the distribution of these kinds of causality; and it is not "logic," in M. Lévy Bruhl's sense, certainly not the "Law of Contradiction," which will give us any help in the matter, but only experience, and reflection upon experience.

And if there is this general indistinctness among primitive men as to what things act like minds and what like bodies, it is natural that this indistinctness should be most conspicuous in regard to those beings which clearly exhibit, even to our more critical survey, something of the nature of mind, and yet seem unable to enter into the fellowship of mutual converse with us, namely, the lower animals. Is there anything requiring the heroic measure of supposing that the mental functions are quite different in primitive men from what they are in ourselves, in the belief that the lower animals may (like most of ourselves) prick up their ears when they hear themselves mentioned,[1] so that it is better not to mention them when you want your proceedings not to attract their attention, either because you do not want them to attack you or because you want yourself to attack them unawares? No doubt the association of a name with the thing named is

[1] Pp. 47, 200.

thought by primitive men (like that of the image with its original) to be closer than it has been found by a more extended experience to be, so that this care not to name powerful and harmful beings is extended to cases where it seems to us quite unreasonable. Many of us are probably familiar with Fouqué's use in his story of *Sintram and his Companions* of the notion that to call in reckless mood on Death or on the Devil may chance to bring these highly undesirable companions to our side. But would this be an unreasonable fear if we thought that there were such beings who might overhear us?

Even belief in the magical power of a name pronounced to compel its bearer against his will to attend the utterer, or to make other things behave as they would in the presence of the being named, is the illegitimate extension of a belief which experience—ours as well as primitive man's—abundantly justifies. The calling of a man by a particular name (as in the case of a nickname or a pet name)

may, and often does, by means of the emotions excited by it in the hearer, put him, even against his will, in a certain relation to the utterer, and call forth activities which nothing else would call forth. Is it wonderful, again, that this power should be by primitive men attributed to the name in abstraction from the whole context of personal intercourse in which alone it is exerted?

Once more, I am not supposing that primitive man deliberately extends by way of hypothesis the explanation found satisfactory for one case to others which we have found it not to fit. I only suggest that the real experience of the power of names in human intercourse is the real source of the belief in that power everywhere, though it was not at first at all noticed that human intercourse was the only condition under which this power was actually exercised. Such a view is quite on the lines of the "sociological" theory itself, so far as it makes social experience the type of what is extended, at first through lack of

discrimination, but afterwards theoretically (and in this case, at least, erroneously), to a wider sphere. And I do not at all question the powerful effect of social and religious tradition in preserving and stereotyping a belief which, though originally derived from experience, had not been checked by reference to experience, but had gathered from long prescription a kind of sacrosanctity.

To suppose, as M. Lévy Bruhl does, that the notion of a purely physical phenomenon is lacking to the primitive man (if we mean by the notion of a purely physical phenomenon the notion of a phenomenon which is not "mystical") seems gratuitous, and even in contradiction with the same primitive man's attribution of occult power or *mana* not to *all* things but only to *certain* things, however heterogeneous. Probably here, too, we may be better instructed by remembering our own childhood. The child is ready to accept anything—even the most unpromising to older eyes—as capable of entering into relations of

personal intercourse with himself; but what does not at the time interest him at all is not so treated. The uninteresting thing is for him merely what *we* should mean by a "physical phenomenon."

On the other hand, "collective representations" may, even among the most civilized of men, hinder the development of individual criticism, just as among the primitive. They do so less, no doubt, but this is a matter of degree. It is not true to say or imply, as M. Lévy Bruhl does, that *we* do not believe in any properties of objects which we do not perceive, while primitive men readily do so. Are we not, on the contrary, perfectly ready to believe, on the authority of scientific men, in properties (e.g. radio-activity) which *we* do not perceive and never expect to perceive? It is true we suppose them to have been perceived (or inferred from what has been perceived) by scientific men on whom we rely. But it is no less true (as M. Lévy Bruhl's own instances show) that the primitive man

supposes the occult properties in which *he* believes to be perceived by his medicine-man. Nor will it do to say that we never believe in properties which *we* do not perceive, although we may be present when those who would persuade us of their existence say that *they* perceive them. For this, too, is not true. We are prepared to believe that persons of finer ear than ourselves can detect musical intervals which we cannot, persons of keener smell detect odours imperceptible to us, and so forth. And, whether the stories of people with a "cat-sense" or "spider-sense" be true or not, we do not consider them to be ruled out by any law (for, despite M. Lévy Bruhl,[1] we recognize no such law) that nothing can be real which is only perceptible to some and not to all.

Thus, once more, the whole question is one, not of our logic as against the "prelogic" of primitive men, but purely of a more advanced state of knowledge of the actual facts.

[1] *Les Fonctions Mentales*, etc., p. 58.

If primitive men continue to believe in the efficacy of fetishes, though they have always been disappointed of the benefits they hoped to obtain from them, and find an explanation in some counteracting influence; if more advanced men, under the influence of that survival of primitive prelogic which is called Religion, account for their desertion by their God as the merited punishment of their own sins; so, too, in our own "lay" civilization belief in much-advertised healers and public men of any kind is often created and maintained by the "collective representations" due to the opinion of the fashionable world or the puffing of the newspaper press, in the teeth of a notable absence of any evidence that they deserve their reputation. Nothing here authorizes us, as M. Lévy Bruhl says we are authorized, to assert that primitive mentality differs from ours.

M. Lévy Bruhl, as his book proceeds, seems to me to become more and more reckless in his dogmatic assertion of this doctrine, and

his instances to become less and less convincing. A missionary in New Guinea,[1] whose arrival in a certain place coincided with an epidemic of disease, was suspected of some connection with it, on the principle, presumably, of Mill's Method of Difference, which one would suppose to belong to the logical sort of mentality. The Papuans very reasonably thought that among the new-comer's belongings might be found the cause of the visitation. They suspected first a sheep, then some goats, which were killed to satisfy them; but the epidemic continued, and they had to frame another hypothesis. They then pitched upon a large print of Queen Victoria. Now, no doubt all these hypotheses were incorrect, and no doubt they were not put to strictly scientific tests. But how does the procedure differ in its general character from what our own would be in suspecting an outbreak of disease to be due to some newly arrived animal or piece of furniture which

[1] *Les Fonctions Mentales*, etc., pp. 71 foll.

might be the carrier of the germ? The knowledge of the New Guinea natives in these matters was, no doubt, not extensive; they were, like most people, insufficiently cautious in the matter of testing their hypotheses; but their logic was not at fault, unless that of civilized man is so too. There is really nothing in the point, insisted upon by M. Lévy Bruhl,[1] that they had long been familiar with the Queen's picture before suspecting it of having a connection with the disease. Were our modern doctors not justified in asking themselves whether rats had not something to do with plague or lack of fresh air with consumption, because rats and airless rooms had long been familiar to them and no one had suspected them before? What, we wonder, would M. Lévy Bruhl say if he chanced to read the following, which I take from an article in *The Times* of May 8, 1914, on the ravages of the sleeping sickness in Africa? "Unfortunately," it is said, "it is extremely

[1] P. 74.

difficult to convince the natives of any connection between the fly (the tsetse fly) and the disease, since they and their forbears knew the former long before the sleeping sickness was ever heard of in the land." The natives of Africa are here censured (you will notice) precisely because they argue as M. Lévy Bruhl would apparently have argued in the case of Queen Victoria's portrait and the New Guinea epidemic, but as the natives of New Guinea did not argue in that case, and are in consequence called by M. Lévy Bruhl "prelogical."

Where, again, is the proof of a different mentality from ours in the fact [1] that the same design on a sacred object and on one not sacred may by primitive men be in the one case regarded as highly significant, and in the other to have had no signification at all, or as signifying, when placed on different objects, things as "different as a gum-tree and a frog"? Would it not be true that a broad

[1] P. 129.

arrow on certain objects carries with it to an English eye the significance that they are the property of the Government, while on others it would pass unnoticed as a meaningless mark? Would not the letter A on the blackboard in a logic-lecturer's room suggest a Universal Affirmative Proposition, but in a professor of music's room a particular note of a certain musical scale? [1]

M. Lévy Bruhl compares [2] the fear of an old Australian that in directing some malignant magic against an enemy he might have been affected himself by the evil influence, to that of an anatomist who might believe himself to have contracted an infectious disease through pricking himself with an instrument he was using in the dissection of the corpse of a

[1] It is curious that M. Lévy Bruhl, considering a remark on page 129, in which he illustrates from a musician's indifference to certain irrelevant resemblances in the different musical scores, does not see that the arguments which he here uses do not establish any diversity between primitive and civilized minds as regards processes of reasoning.

[2] P. 324.

person dead of that disease. But why is the former fear prelogical as compared with the latter? It is merely less well informed.

To add one more instance of this same sort of inconsequence, it is regarded [1] as an example of prelogical mentality that among African savages the deaths of important persons (not of unimportant) are frequently assumed to be due to witchcraft, and a hunt takes place for the guilty party, in consequence of which some one is generally condemned to death. But just in the same way, at certain periods (e.g. under the early Roman Empire or in the Italy of the Renaissance), men who would not be regarded by M. Lévy Bruhl or by any one else as in the "prelogical" stage were apt to suspect poison whenever a considerable person died; and there were often no doubt there, as in Africa more lately, cases where influential men could vent their spite or gratify their covetousness by destroying, through false accusations, either their enemies

[1] *Les Fonctions Mentales*, etc., p. 325.

or men possessed of wealth, some of which might be confiscated to themselves. No doubt witchcraft is not in our eyes a *vera causa* like poison; but it is not the Law of Contradiction that teaches us this, it is observation and experiment. But, though no doubt observation and experiment are mentioned in the logic books under the head of Induction, I do not suppose M. Lévy Bruhl would suppose that there is nothing of the kind in *les sociétés inférieures*.

Doubtless, as is shown in the instance of the trials for witchcraft in the seventeenth century, religious tradition may prevent the honest application of the test of observation and experiment; but so may traditions of a very different sort. There is such a thing as group-prejudice among scientific men which has before now hindered the impartial examination of alleged facts reputed to be inconsistent with accepted scientific beliefs. Such prejudice is no doubt irrational, whether found in a religious or a scientific

community; but why should the word "pre-logical" be invented to describe it? It also, no doubt, as I have said, acts through social pressure; but it is no less social pressure which keeps most of us on lines which have been traced for us by the great masters of modern science.

The group theory of Religion advocated by the French sociologists, and M. L'évy Bruhl's theory of the difference between the mental functions of primitive and those of civilized men, are put forward by them in conscious opposition to the theory of Animism which is associated with the name of Sir Edward Tylor, the father of Anthropology in the modern sense of the word. For the Tylorian theory of Animism represents primitive men as supposing all, or many of, the objects which we call inanimate to be animate—that is, to have souls dwelling in them, just as we usually (or at least traditionally) regard the bodies of human beings as having souls dwelling in them. This theory is criticized by the French

sociologists as, in the first place, implying that primitive men, like civilized, form hypotheses to account for particular phenomena, and that the "soul" which they are said to suppose indwelling many things, the behaviour of which we should put down to mechanical movements or chemical changes, is such an hypothesis. Secondly, it is criticized as implying in primitive men a conception of a "soul" far more definitely thought out than any which can with probability be ascribed to them. With respect to this second line of criticism, there is much reason to agree with it up to a certain point. The distinction, with which Dr. Marett has made us familiar, of *animatism* from *animism*, is intended to express the difference between the vaguer conception of certain things which we should call inanimate, as being alive, or rather as acting like living things, and the more elaborate conception which personifies the life in each case as a kind of quasi-human being, using a non-human body, distinct from itself, as its

instrument. This latter conception, which is involved in the theory of Animism strictly so called, we may well regard as a result of subsequent reflection, in contrast to that more indeterminate notion of things as themselves alive which seems also to correspond more nearly with what we remember of our own attitude in childhood.

But in this important matter of the soul, where M. Lévy Bruhl finds a striking illustration of his theory of the difference in mental function between primitive and civilized man, I think we may say that we shall find no real support for that theory at all. To M. Lévy Bruhl the Law of Contradiction is constantly violated by primitive conceptions of a man's soul, such as the African *kra*,[1] which is at once himself and not himself. "It is not the individual, since it exists before him and survives him; yet it is he, since when he wakes from sleep the individual remembers what the *kra* has done, endured,

[1] P. 85.

suffered during the night." For dream adventures are supposed to be those of the *kra*, which has left the body lying asleep, as we say, and gone off by itself. Again, we, if we talk of souls at all, think of each man as having *one* soul; for we form the hypothesis of a soul just in order to act as a principle of unity, to explain why we talk of a man as the same in all his different moods and states of consciousness, and notwithstanding the gradual replacement by others of all the material particles that at any one time make up his body. But primitive men are ready to talk of one man having many souls. In this paradoxical multiplication of souls, which are yet all somehow one, M. Lévy Bruhl can see only the existence or survival of a prelogical mentality which knew not the Law of Contradiction.

Yet, if we turn to such facts as those with which modern mental pathology has made us familiar, as suggesting what, in the title of Dr. Morton Prince's well-known work, is

called the "dissociation of a personality," we are compelled, quite apart from any pressure of social or religious tradition, and merely in order to describe actually observed phenomena, to recognize different "personalities," "sub-personalities," and so on, belonging somehow to one man or one woman. Sometimes two of these "personalities" seem to have no part of their memory in common; sometimes one remembers some or part of what the other has done but not as its own act, and so forth. Now, no doubt it is possible to criticize the language in which Dr. Morton Prince and other students of these abnormal phenomena describe them, but it is unquestionable that they make it necessary to use *some* language which, if M. Lévy Bruhl found it among savages, he would assuredly assign to the mentality which is governed by the Law of Participation and innocent of that of Contradiction. Yet there is, as I say, no question here of the persistence of primitive language due to the influence of "collective

representations." Indeed, the facts of "multiple personality" are obviously rather disconcertingly incongruous than otherwise with the notion of the "immortal soul," which is one of the most influential "collective representations" imposed by our social tradition.

Again I will refer to a book of singular independence and candour by a modern man of science, Dr. McDougall's *Body and Mind*. In this work Dr. McDougall undertakes the defence of what he calls Animism, the theory of a soul in living beings distinct from, however closely connected with the body, as a psychological hypothesis more accordant with known psychological facts than any which attempts to dispense with this conception altogether. It is clear to the attentive reader that at the outset Dr. McDougall is thinking of a soul which is, in the ordinary sense, individual, which may be my soul or yours, but cannot belong to, or rather be, more than one of us at once. Yet before he has done he has come, in following his argument, accord-

ing to the Platonic precept,[1] "whithersoever, like a wind, it may blow," to the notion of what we may call a racial soul, of which individual souls are, as it were, phases or manifestations. And he hardly goes on to touch upon further problems which his treatment inevitably suggests; such as that of the relation of the soul of a natural species to the genus, or on the other side to, let us say, a race (in the sense in which we speak of the white or the yellow race); or, again, to still more difficult questions connected with the common life of a nation or other group which is united, not by the biological ties of descent, or not by these alone, but rather by the links of social tradition.

A group-theorist can least of all men afford to disregard such problems as unimportant; but they can hardly be stated without recurrence to language which M. Lévy Bruhl would undoubtedly refer to the Law of Participation. Yet these problems are thrust upon us, not

[1] *Rep.*, iii. 394D.

by " collective representations " acting on us as sharers in a group consciousness, but by those objective facts connected with the existence of groups with a group-consciousness which are, according to the writers of *L'Année Sociologique*, the proper subject of scientific sociology.

The real flaw, as it seems to me, in the sociological theories under consideration, which, as we shall see, makes them incapable of dealing satisfactorily with the facts of individual religion, is the combination of insistence on the importance of " collective representations " with the assumption in the last resort of what is after all a purely individualistic empiricism as its philosophical background.

This seems to be a defect which might have been corrected—and, as I shall shortly point out, M. Durkheim in his article in the *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale* seems to be, at any rate, on the way to correct it.[1] It

[1] It is to a great extent corrected in the book to which that article formed an Introduction.

is admitted by M. Lévy Bruhl that it is difficult to draw the line between individual and collective representations;[1] that the connexions implied by the collective representations of the prelogical mentality are not so arbitrary as they appear;[2] and that with us logical exigencies are imposed by the uninterrupted pressure of the social medium (*le milieu social*) upon the mind of each individual among us, just as the most fantastic beliefs of primitive men are imposed upon the individual members of primitive groups.[3]

All this suggests that there is no such contrast between the primitive and the civilized mentality and their respective functions as M. Lévy Bruhl would have us admit. Why should we not allow that man is at once always an individual, and always social, a πολιτικὸν ζῶον? that his illusions and his genuine science are both alike the product of a mentality which is never independent of "collective representations," yet always

[1] P. 112. [2] P. 445. [3] Pp. 113, 114.

functions individually? Why not admit that the apprehension of reality is not reserved for individual perception as opposed to the use of "collective representations"? It may be possible to distinguish the features of reality which are apprehended by individual perception from those which require the use of "collective representations," yet this cannot be an absolute distinction, for in human perception is always present that implicit rationality which is not really separable from the social consciousness; while, on the other hand, the "collective representation" only exists, is only actualized in, individual representations.

The individual mind is always subject to the pressure of the "social medium," and the operation of this is equally seen in the encouragement and in the checking of individual trains of thought and imagination. Such checking takes place both where the free development of these would be desirable, and where it would be the reverse. As a child

brought up in London, I chose a private totem (I did not call it by that name) in the shape of the Underground Railway; and I liked to fancy an especial link of sympathy existing between me and this mysterious object. It was mysterious to me, since from the circumstances of the locality of my home, right in the centre of the "Inner Circle," I never, or practically never, travelled by it, but only delighted to stand above an opening at the Portland Road Station, where I could look down and see the trains issuing from and disappearing into the smoky darkness of the tunnel. This totemistic fancy, by the way, was surely not itself in any intelligible sense the product of "collective representations" in the consciousness of the group. But perhaps I need not turn aside to urge this, as M. Lévy Bruhl himself surprises us by observing in one place,[1] *à propos* of the almost universal belief in the laying of the ghost in the neighbourhood of the corpse of

[1] P. 367.

a person lately dead: "Were it not involved in the collective representation, it might be produced in individuals by the psychical mechanism." Nothing in my social medium, however, encouraged my totemistic fancy, and accordingly it soon faded away.

On the other hand, the influence of "collective representations" belonging to groups thoroughly representative of what M. Lévy Bruhl would call the logical mentality may on occasion be hostile to the attainment of truth, just in the same way as those of the most primitive groups.

The present Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester, Sir Henry Miers, in the inaugural lecture delivered on his appointment to the Chair of Mineralogy in the University of Oxford, insisted on the marked reluctance shown by men of science in the early nineteenth century to admit that stones ever really fell from the sky. In the same lecture he drew an instructive parallel between the attitude of these scientific

men a hundred years ago towards the evidence for the fall of meteoric stones, and that of many scientific men at the date of the lecture [1] towards the evidence then being offered for the existence of what is called Telepathy.

[1] Which was delivered in 1896.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF THE THEORIES OF THE SOCIOLOGISTS

LET me now try to justify my statement that the theory of M. Lévy Bruhl and of many of his collaborators (if not that of M. Durkheim) does assume an ultimate empiricism. M. Lévy Bruhl certainly holds [1] that when the "cognitive function" (*la fonction connaissante*) differentiates itself from the other elements involved in the "collective representations" which constitute the most primitive kind of cognition, "it does not furnish the equivalent of the elements" from which it thus separates itself. These persist side by side with it for a long time, despite the dissolvent effect of the "logical" habit of

[1] *Les Fonctions Mentales*, etc., pp. 450 foll.

mind. For the intolerance of *la pensée logique* is not reciprocal. *La pensée logique* "suffers no contradiction, and strives to exterminate it as soon as it perceives it," but "the mystical and prelogical mentality is, on the contrary, indifferent to logical exigency."

I have already ventured to doubt whether M. Lévy Bruhl has not a very confused notion of the nature of contradiction; but it is plain from this passage that the non-logical or mystical element in consciousness is regarded as persisting in virtue of its own irrationality. "Such collective representations belonging to the prelogical and mystical mentality"—so M. Lévy Bruhl concludes the paragraph from which the above observations are taken[1]—"are in all societies of which we have any knowledge the collective representations on which repose a great number of institutions; in particular many of those which are implied in our moral and religious beliefs and practices." "Our mental activity" (he says

[1] P. 452.

later on [1]) "is at once rational and irrational. The prelogical and mystical coexist in it with the logical." The attempt to rationalize beliefs which do not relate to the world of sense-experience appears to him to be necessarily futile. "God," he says,[2] "is, in the society to which we belong, an object sought by logical thought and given in collective representations of a different order. The effort made by reason to attain to a knowledge of God seems at once to incite the thinker to God and to remove him to a distance from him. The necessity of conforming himself to the exigencies of logic is opposed to these participations between man and God which are not representable without contradiction. The knowledge attained is thus reduced within a very small compass. But what need of this rational knowledge to the believer who *feels* himself united to God? Does not the consciousness which he has of the participation of his being in the divine essence procure for

[1] P. 455. [2] P. 453.

him a certitude of faith, in comparison with which logical certitude will always be something pale, cold, and almost a matter of indifference to its possessor?"

The meaning of this passage is clear. What is "mystical" is "prelogical"; it survives among us because the "logical cognition" (which alone apprehends an objective reality) does not satisfy our emotions, as food for which we keep by us, as it were, the illusions which the prelogical mentality produced, but the art of producing which we, with our logical habits of mind, have unfortunately lost. This is not, of course, a very uncommon point of view; and it is obviously M. Lévy Bruhl's. There is for him nothing objectively real to which the "collective representations" of the mystical mentality can be considered to correspond.

So, too, in a passage of their essay on Magic to which I have already referred, MM. Hubert and Mauss consider[1] it self-evident

[1] *L'A. S.*, vii. 122.

that such a notion as that of *mana* has no *raison d'être* outside of society, and that it is absurd from the point of view of pure reason, and only arises from the functioning of the life of a group. Pure reason is here identified with the individual reason—although it is said elsewhere in the same essay that the individual is always conditioned by the state of society to which he belongs, and although a collective illusion (such as the belief in Magic) is said [1]—I do not know why—to possess as being collective an objectivity far superior to that which it would have if it were only [2] a tissue of false ideas held by individuals only, a primitive and erroneous sort of science.

These authors, however, in denying (as it seems to me unwarrantably) any cognitive value to the emotions, are not really thereby establishing all the more firmly (as perhaps

[1] *L'A. S.*, vii. 141.

[2] The reference is of course to Sir James Frazer's view of magic.

they suppose) the validity of the empirical sciences. On the contrary, the *a priori* principles which Kant showed to be necessary to these tend with them to be treated as mere ghosts of "collective representations" belonging to what M. Lévy Bruhl calls the prelogical and mystical mentality. But a pure empiricism must end, with Hume, in scepticism. The attempt to explain the indisputableness which we attribute to certain principles by just such pressure of the social medium as is admittedly exercised at least no less frequently in favour of erroneous beliefs, cannot really lead anywhere else; and the arguments still remain unshaken by which Aristotle long ago showed the necessity, if we are to have genuine science, of admitting indemonstrable first principles immediately apprehended.[1]

As I have already observed, M. Durkheim himself, the editor of *L'Année Sociologique*, has in his article in the *Revue de Métaphysique*

[1] *Post. An.*, i. 3.

*et Morale* for 1908 on *Sociologie Réligieuse*,[1] set forth the type of view which we have been studying in a form far less open, in my judgment, to the criticisms which I have suggested than that in which it is presented by some of his collaborators. I now turn to this article, in which the doctrine of the French sociologists about Religion and about its relation to social life is seen at its best. I will first, however, refer to an earlier article in the same review, published ten years earlier,[2] on *Représentations Individuelles et Représentations Collectives*. "One must choose;" says M. Durkheim in this article: "either epiphenomenalism is indeed the truth or there is really a memory which is mental in the proper sense of the word." The former alternative, he tells us, is indefensible, hence the latter must be admitted. This observation is noticeable, because it shows that M. Durkheim has faced what I am sure he is right in considering the truth, that a materialism acknowledging no

[1] *R. de M. et M.*, xvii. 733. [2] vi. 273.

reality, but one amenable to the methods of the sciences which deal with matter in motion, must, if it is to be consistent and thoroughgoing, end in the paradoxical doctrine called epiphenomenalism. This is the doctrine—from asserting which the courage of Huxley did not shrink—that consciousness makes no difference at all to the course of the events, so that what, when it happens to us, seems to be the result of our thoughts and feelings, would have happened just as much under any other circumstances, though we had neither felt nor thought, exactly as the carriage wheel goes on turning, whether it be casting a shadow or no. I am convinced, with M. Durkheim, that epiphenomenalism is indefensible, and that Mind must be allowed to be a real factor in the course of events, although the methods of the purely physical sciences may be incompetent to deal with it. For the relation to one another of "representations" (we will not now quarrel with this not very fortunate expression—we may substitute if we please

"mental states") is not that of externality to one another as of objects in space—they interpenetrate one another.[1] The attempt to save Materialism by supposing a spatial coincidence in the brain corresponding to each similitude which the mind apprehends is purely mythological. "Such a cerebral geography belongs rather to the realm of romance than to that of science." Here, too, I am cordially in agreement with M. Durkheim. M. Durkheim is of opinion that what he calls the persistence of representations as such is demonstrated by the fact that ideas are associated by resemblance. I should prefer to get rid of this kind of phraseology, which is the curse of current psychology (and is ultimately, though this is not always suspected, a *damnosa hereditas* from Aristotle[2]), and to speak of the fact of memory as inexplicable without

[1] I do not know, by the way, whether M. Durkheim's use of this phrase is independent of M. Bergson or not.

[2] Cp. Mr. H. W. B. Joseph in *Mind*, N.S. xix. 76, Oct. 1910, p. 468.

supposing a mind which is more than the sum of successive states of consciousness.

I do not know whether M. Durkheim would allow this translation of his words. He probably would not, as he expressly says he does not think the hypothesis of a soul necessary to account for memory. But this is due to his entanglement in the theory of "representations," or, as in English they have most often been called, "ideas," words which, as has now been shown, can be dispensed with almost or even altogether in a psychological treatise [1] without injury—rather with benefit—to its clearness. But the language I have used is intended to describe the same facts as he has in view.

The great point is, as he goes on to insist, that the difficulty of "representing phenomena," as he calls it—of imagining how things come about, as I should prefer to say—must

[1] Almost by Dr. McDougall in his *Psychology or the Study of Behaviour*, and altogether by Messrs. Loveday and Green in their *Introduction to Psychology*. Cp. Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, art. "Idea."

not be permitted to hinder the recognition of well ascertained facts. The now familiar phenomena due to the action of the X rays offer, as he shows, just such a difficulty; and he remarks that we must not rule out *a priori* the possibility of so-called "telepathy" without careful study of the evidence because we find it difficult to imagine the *modus operandi*.

He thinks that the fact of memory requires the admission that there are *unconscious psychical states*, difficult though these certainly are to "represent." I do not propose now to discuss this particular point. It is arguable that the supposed necessity of an unconscious state between a state of consciousness A and a state of consciousness B in which A is remembered is mythological in the same kind of way as what M. Durkheim aptly calls the "cerebral geography" of the materialists. But I should quite agree with M. Durkheim's assertion of the relative independence of ideas—I should rather say of

mind, or even of soul—upon nervous cells, although several of these must co-operate before consciousness arises in the organism.

This relative independence of ideas upon cells is then taken to illustrate the relative independence of social phenomena on individual minds, although these must co-operate for social phenomena to come into being. I should here only interject the caution (which will be found to have importance later) that the relation of the cells to the mind is much less intimate than that of individual consciousness to the social consciousness, and recall, as of first-rate value here, the immortal pages of Plato's *Republic* which deal with the relation of the State or Society to the individual soul. But I think M. Durkheim is perfectly right in holding that, in speaking of the social consciousness, we are not merely speaking in a summary way of a number of individual consciousnesses, as I might refer generally to the ink spots on a desk instead of pointing to each separately. There is even a sense in

which, as he says, "Society comprehends things as well as individual persons." It must, however, be admitted that, if we allow this, we must also allow that individual personalities cannot be treated as though there were not some things—their bodies at least, and not only their bodies—apart from which they would not be what we mean by those individual personalities at all.

But M. Durkheim not only admits a relative independence of the social consciousness; he even allows to Religion a relative independence of the social consciousness. The latter does not, he tells us, directly determine the development of religion any more than cerebral physiology determines wholly even the sensations, the most rudimentary forms of individual consciousness, the way in which they give rise to images, concepts, etc. Here, again, I do not wish to say that I find no difficulty in M. Durkheim's phraseology. But I welcome the admission implied that the religious development of man has its own laws,

which cannot be ascertained merely by deduction from the non-religious needs of the social organism. This seems to me, at any rate, to suggest the possibility that in Religion there is an apprehension of a genuine reality, which is independent even of society, in the sense that it is not a mere product of the social nature of man, though not necessarily so unconnected with it but that it may be the ground of the existence of that very social nature itself.

In his later article on *Sociologie Religieuse* M. Durkheim tells us[1] further that in the religious nature of man is revealed to us an essential and permanent aspect of his nature. It is[2] an essential postulate of sociology that no human institution could endure if it were solely based on error and falsehood. Hence[3] all religions are in a sense true religions. There is no religion which is not a cosmology

[1] P. 733; *E. F.*, Eng. tr., p. 2.
[2] P. 734; ibid.
[3] P. 735; ibid., p. 3.

at the same time as it is a speculation on the Divine.[1] This is, I feel sure, quite true, and very important. The notion of the Divine is no mere mirage of social facts: it is an implicit theory of the universe. The human mind necessarily conceives itself with the All, though it always starts in doing so with its immediate social environment, and only gradually realizes that this is not the dominant fact in the universe.

This recognition of the essentially cosmological character of Religion leads M. Durkheim to put the doctrine, dear to the French sociologists, of the religious origin of categories in a far truer light than we have yet seen it presented. "There exists at the roots of our judgments a certain number of fundamental notions. In the course of the methodical analysis of religious beliefs we meet naturally enough with the principal of these categories. They are plainly born in and of Religion. They are all full of religious

[1] P. 742; *E. F.*, Eng. tr., p. 9.

elements." [1] I do not wish to dispute the truth of what I take M. Durkheim here to mean.

The categories are genuinely fundamental; they are principles of general classification; but the thought of the whole of the universe is primarily presented as a religious thought; and thus we find these "categories" from the first associated with religious emotion. Man no doubt *does* go "from religion to philosophy," but this does not mean that philosophy is a persistence of outworn religious nonsense in the disguise of science, which the enlightened anthropologist will strip off the pretender to the great advantage of humanity.

"The general conclusion," says M. Durkheim,[2] "of the book which is here placed before the reader" (that is, of his work on *Les Formes Elémentaires de la pensée et de*

[1] P. 742; *E. F.*, Eng. tr., p. 9. The translation, here and elsewhere, in quotations from the Introduction, is my own.

[2] P. 743; ibid., p. 10.

*la Vie Religieuse*, to which the article we are considering is intended to form the Preface) "is that religion is a thing eminently social. Religious representations" (ideas, that is) "are 'collective representations'—or ideas—expressive of social realities."

Apart from the language about "representations expressive of reality," which can easily be translated into other terms if we feel it to be too suggestive of an epistemological theory which we may not share, there is, I think, nothing to quarrel with in this statement. It must mean that in his religious experience man is apprehending what is real; and this is just what those of us who are not prepared to treat religion as essentially an illusion are concerned to maintain. Nor need any one who is concerned to maintain this object to the epithet "collective" applied to the real object of religious experience. In the Christian religion the divine Spirit is regarded as primarily revealed in the life of the Christian society; and the Christian creed

has always asserted the closest possible connection between the Holy Ghost and the Holy Catholic Church. It has thus proclaimed the essentially social nature of the Divine; nor does it stand alone in this among the higher religions.

But this subject may engage our attention hereafter. For the present we will return to M. Durkheim.

## CHAPTER VIII

### M. DURKHEIM'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

WE shall find M. Durkheim [1] expressing what is true in what may be called the "group theory of categories" in regard to time and space, as he has expressed the "group theory of religion" in a shape which does not necessarily involve, as some expressions of it do, a failure to recognize that essentially *a priori* character which Kant showed to belong to our apprehension of certain elements in the world of our experience. There is nothing but what harmonizes with the recognition of this *a priori* character in the observation that the possession of notions of time and space as the same for all is presupposed in all social co-opera-

[1] P. 744; *E. F.*, Eng. tr., p. 10.

tion; and as it is precisely in such co-operation that such notions are thus found necessary, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the divisions of time, for example (and perhaps the same, as we saw, may be true of divisions of space), bear the marks of the social context in which their use began; that a "calendar," as M. Durkheim says,[1] expresses by correspondence with the periodical recurrence of rites, festivals, and public ceremonies the rhythm of the collective activity at the same time as it assures the regularity of that activity. "Reason is no other" (I again quote M. Durkheim[2]) "than the assemblage of the fundamental categories." Empiricism, which denies the *a priori* element in experience, is rightly named irrationalism. The *a priorists* are more respectful to facts than the empiricists. We always "add to experience." But how do we come to be able to do so? Is it that our *a priori* judgments are emanations of

[1] P. 787; *E. F.*, Eng. tr., pp. 10, 11.
[2] P. 748; ibid., p. 13.

a divine reason? But (says M. Durkheim [1]) such an hypothesis can be brought to no experimental test; and, while those who have used such language suppose the divine reason to be unchangeable, human categories change both in place and time. The view that categories are social in origin will solve the old dispute of empiricists and *a priorists*, keeping apart the two elements which really exist in human knowledge, since man is always a double being—at once individual and social.

It is plain that some points in this account are open to criticism. If "categories" change both in place and time, this implies that the categories of space and time [2] cannot themselves change in like manner, since it is in them that this change is said to take place. They must thus be at least relatively permanent. But are any genuine categories

[1] *E. F.*, Eng. tr., p. 15.

[2] Of course time and space are not, according to Kant's own terminology, categories, but they are according to M. Durkheim's less restricted use of the term, for which there is much to be said.

indeed thus mutable? That there may be said to be a development of categories, in which some pass over into others, has been since Hegel well known; and the germ of the doctrine is already present in Kant's triadic arrangement, in which the third category in each of his four groups is reached by a combination of the first and second. But this is probably not the kind of mutability which M. Durkheim has in view. For, as the mention of Hegel is sufficient to suggest, it is in nowise inconsistent with the view of them as "emanations" or manifestations of a divine reason.

Any other kind of mutability, on the other hand, is difficult to reconcile with the nature of reason. To hold that categories should not merely be relatively abstract or inadequate, but should possess a validity merely local or temporal, is surely only possible with consistency for a thinker who is content (as M. Durkheim is not) to be claimed as an irrationalist. No doubt categories may be

recognized or used here and not there, now and not then, but this is a kind of variation carefully to be distinguished from any which should affect the validity of the categories themselves. The dismissal of the conception of a divine reason as the source of our *a priori* judgments is only rendered necessary for M. Durkheim by his assumption that a divine reason must be something quite different from a social or collective reason.[1] I am not, indeed, prepared to say that to speak of a divine reason is merely to call a social or collective reason by another name. But I should not doubt that the conception of a divine reason first dawns upon the human mind in the form of a conception of a collective or social reason which the individual shares with his fellows. It first becomes *distinguished* from the conception of a merely social or collective reason, when the individual attains the level of development at which he not only sees in that which all his

[1] But see the passage quoted above, p. 93 *n.* 2.

fellows recognize as valid or desirable the really or objectively valid, the really or objectively desirable, but comes to recognize that something may be really and objectively valid or desirable which not only he but his whole group fail to accept or to desire.

The claim of M. Durkheim to reconcile the empiricists and the "apriorists" by his theory of the social origin of the categories will remind English readers of Spencer's claim to do the like by his theory of inherited results of experience.[1] I should certainly prefer M. Durkheim's claim to Spencer's. It is not embarrassed by the same dubious biological assumptions. And I should hold that the *a priori* certainty of certain principles may be most naturally envisaged as a certainty which we shall find acknowledged by all whom we group with ourselves as rational beings. It is, of course, only gradually that it is realized who are and who are not to be expected to share in our

[1] See Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, § 208 *n*.

acknowledgment of the universally true or right. Primitive man will both exclude some whom we should include, and include some (e.g. his totem animals) whom we should exclude from the group of rational beings. But once man has realized his membership of a society, he cannot, except by arrest or atrophy of his reasoning powers, stop short of the recognition of all rational beings. This means that he recognizes that what is valid for members of *that* society, for rational beings as such, is so because it "represents," as M. Durkheim would say—I should prefer to say "is a way of apprehending"—what is *real*. It is, no doubt, true that Kant does not put the matter thus; but to maintain the separation, tending to be opposition, between the rational and the real, which is characteristic of his theory of knowledge, is to cut oneself off from the possibility of any genuine apprehension of reality, and to adopt a purely sceptical position, which is only avoided by Kant owing to elements in his view which

are not, in fact, reconcilable with that separation or opposition. M. Durkheim's reconciliation of empiricists and apriorists, if more promising than Spencer's, will not really establish a peace between the combatants acceptable to both. Either the certainty of the apriorists must admit itself to be in fact illusory, a result of social suggestion, or an appeal must in the last resort lie from the society which sanctions them to their own intrinsic validity. It is the latter alternative which M. Durkheim really takes. For him, society[1] is a part of nature, differing only from other natural kingdoms by its greater complexity. The categories are *symboles bien fondés*.[2] A sociological theory of knowledge does not imply the truth of Nominalism, but rather the reverse of this. Though *man* in general is not to be our point of departure, yet it is our point of arrival.[3] It is as an

[1] P. 753; *E. F.*, Eng. tr., p. 18.

[2] This phrase is of course intended to recall Leibnitz's "*phenomena bene fundata.*"

[3] P. 755.

analysis of human nature that history has the importance attached to it by the "sociological" school. The collective consciousness is the true microcosm.[1] In this phrase M. Durkheim certainly means to affirm that the nature of reality reflects itself in the constitution of society, which thus need not fear that in apprehension of reality after its own fashion it is really the victim of illusion; and if we follow Plato (as for my part I am convinced that we should be right in following him) in regarding the individual and social consciousness as necessarily identical in fundamental structure, we have here all the materials for a group theory of Religion, which shall at the same time not make of Religion, even of individual religion, a mere illusion due to collective suggestion, but rather a genuine apprehension of a character of reality which escapes the purview alike of the senses and of the natural sciences.

[1] P. 756.

In a review published at a somewhat earlier date—in 1906—in *L'Année Sociologique*[1] on Jerusalem's *Soziologie der Erkennens* M. Durkheim had already said in a like spirit to that displayed in the article we have just been considering: "It is too often held that the collective type is merely the mean average type. On the contrary, there is a vast interval between the two. The average consciousness is mediocre, intellectually and morally: the collective consciousness, on the other hand, is infinitely rich, since it is rich with all the treasures of civilization." When M. Durkheim says that man is double, having an individual and a social side to his nature, we have to bear in mind that these two sides are merely correlative to one another. Only through his recognition of a society to which he belongs does man attain the consciousness of individuality within it; and conversely his consciousness of something transcending his private self is inseparable from some kind of con-

[1] xi. 44, 45.

sciousness, however undeveloped, of that self as transcended by it.

In these later utterances of M. Durkheim we seem to have got away from the form of "sociological" theory, which in effect opposes the individual consciousness to the social as on the whole, and when purified from emotional elements a consciousness of things as they are from a consciousness of "collective representations," which on the whole "represent" things to be, not as they are but as one would for certain social purposes wish them to be. Such a view must find in religion an illusion. Now, it is, no doubt, possible to take the view that, though religion is thus an illusion, it is not one the disappearance of which is to be expected or even desired. Relegated from the sphere of science and of practice to the sphere of imagination and of art, it must have (so it may be held) an abiding place among the treasures of the human spirit. In this way it may be allowed to be an individual possession.

Indeed, imagination and art may be regarded and often are regarded as being, although, no doubt, socially conditioned and socially valuable, yet as pre-eminently the sphere in which a matured individuality will express itself, and wherein it will least tolerate social interference or regulation. The frequent connexion between artists and unconventionality is a sign of something profoundly characteristic of the imaginative life. There are some for whom a religious mysticism, free from moral or intellectual intolerance and from social or political ambition, can claim the respect due to all forms of individual self-expression, while religious dogmas which pretend to scientific value, religious institutions which pretend to impose obligations, can only be regarded as superannuated survivals in a civilization whose philosophy and polity have become universally "lay."

There is, at present, very familiar to us in this country a sentimental form (if one may venture so to call it) of the kind of sociology

which we have been studying, in which an imaginative sympathy with some, at any rate, of the " collective representations " of primitive men, is more prominent than in the pages of *L'Année Sociologique*, while there is no less confidence in the assumption that, if kinship with these be once detected in the religious beliefs of our contemporaries, this disposes outright of any claim to truth on the part of these religious beliefs.

This way of thinking finds expression especially in Miss Harrison's *Themis*, a work which, however interesting, must be pronounced to be singularly destitute of the scientific spirit, and in which sentimentalism may be said to run riot. " The aroma of mysterious and eternal things " hangs for her (as we learn from her Preface) about the collective hallucinations which make up the religion with which she concerns herself. Her choice of views appears to be determined rather by what she is wont to call their *delightfulness* —which sometimes seems to be due to their

affinity to feminism—than by any more objective quality. But in this type of view even more markedly than in that of the French sociologists we have no place left for a genuinely individual religion. In both cases it is, on the whole, taken for granted that, while reality in the strict or proper sense belongs only to individual bodies in space, the "collective representations" on which religion depends have reality only as modifications of the consciousness which in certain cases results from the complicated organization of certain such bodies, and that as "representations" of the nature of the universe they are illusory.

I am, of course, aware that neither the French sociologists, nor perhaps Miss Harrison and those whose general way of thinking coincides with hers, would entirely endorse this account of their positions. The French sociologists often insist on the objectivity of social phenomena; and Miss Harrison in her *Themis*[1] confesses herself to be inspired by

[1] P. viii.

the Bergsonian conception of the *élan vital*, and to think of individual lives in the main as transient manifestations of a larger life, in which the whole world of conscious beings participates. And, indeed, what I am going on to suggest is that all these writers in a sense pay *too little* attention to the individual. And yet I am persuaded that an individualistic assumption such as I have described lies at the back of their views. For them Religion, because it is a "collective representation," misrepresents the world, and this theory of religion falls under the head of those studied by Baron von Hügel in an admirable and too little known essay on *Religion and Illusion*, published in an Italian translation made for the review called *Cœnobium*.[1]

But it is just because of the individualism in this type of view, which, while acknowledging the existence of a social consciousness, regards it as the sphere of illusion, that Religion, a mode of consciousness or

[1] Lugano, 1911.

experience which is indisputably social, can for them exist in the individual only in so far as he abandons himself to the influence of social suggestion and puts aside "pure reason," which, it is taken for granted in the spirit of the older rationalism, is precisely what is abstractly individual.

No one need be concerned to deny that, whether or no man is made in the likeness of God, God is always conceived by his human worshippers in the likeness of man. This is, I suspect, no less true where religions are least anthropomorphic than in those which are patently such. For (though I cannot here turn aside to discuss the point) I should expect that a tendency not to insist upon personality in God could be shown to correspond on the whole to a certain absence in the worshippers of the characteristics which make for what we may call individualism in private and public life. But, whether this be capable of being shown or no, at least I should feel sure that, where a strong sense of individuality is

carried into the religious life, the worshipper will demand in his God an individuality answering to that of which he is conscious in himself. Hence, conversely, the attribution to God or the gods of strongly marked individual traits will be a sign of the strength of religion as an individual interest.

It is, I think, a feeling of this connection between individuality as ascribed to God and the importance of Religion in the individual as distinguished from the social life that inspires Miss Harrison's freely expressed distaste for gods (whether Olympian or Christian) who are conceived as genuinely individual personalities, and her preference for the more vaguely represented "mystery-gods," in whose case the lines of demarcation between their individuality and that of their worshippers is comparatively blurred. I am not, be it understood, here intending to deny (what I have elsewhere [1] argued at some length) that we are bound to conceive a truly *divine* personality in

[1] *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 252.

a way which will bring it at several points into conflict with the notion of an individual personality as exclusive of others, such as is that of you or of me. Moreover, I am convinced, as much as Miss Harrison is, that even a somewhat barbarous and primitive type of mysticism does contain elements essential to Religion which may be missing in another kind of religion, which in emphasizing the individuality of its god or gods leaves no room for that mutual indwelling of the God and his worshipper ("we in him and he in us") which is quite essential to what may be called in the truest sense *personal* religion. But I should recognize in the tendency which Miss Harrison illustrates from the "Olympian" element in Greek religion one which is, I feel sure, a necessary and abiding factor in religion, though one which can be one-sidedly exaggerated to the detriment of the whole, and not one which (unless I misunderstand her picturesque language in the Introduction to *Themis*), she supposes has no such abiding

significance as belongs to the vague sense of a common life in our group, or even in the whole world that is animated by M. Bergson's *élan vital*. For, as I have already remarked, M. Bergson's account of the *élan vital* as the supreme reality has (so she tells us herself) served as the inspiration of Miss Harrison's latest work.

I am not, therefore, content with such group theories of Religion as we have been considering, whether they be dispassionate or touched with emotion, whether they be after M. Lévy Bruhl's fashion or after Miss Harrison's, as satisfactory accounts of Religion. They do not do justice to what we usually mean by individual or personal religion, and must inevitably end in a view of it as something illusory and destined to perish in proportion as genuine knowledge of the world increases.

## CHAPTER IX

### GROUP THEORIES OF RELIGION AND INDIVIDUAL RELIGION

Now, when we look back on the history of religions, I think we shall find that it is in Religion that at different periods has lain the strength of what opposition there was to dominant tendencies towards exaggeration, now of the individual factor in reality against the universal, and now again of the universal against the individual.

The former kind of exaggeration is exemplified in Nominalism; and Nominalism, for all its dialectical victories, has again and again wrecked itself upon the rock of religious experience, which found that such doctrines as those of the Trinity, of the Atonement, of Original Sin, expressed something which

could have no meaning to a nominalistic philosophy, since to such a philosophy mutual exclusiveness was the essential characteristic of real individuality, and the universal was nothing but a word, an "idol," [1] a device or convenient figment of our minds. On the other hand, it has been Religion which has offered a no less steady resistance to a view in which the individual simply vanishes in the universal. Thus in the European middle ages, if such Christian dogmas as those to which I have just referred, of the Trinity, Atonement, and Original Sin, checked the nominalistic tendency inherent in the prevalent scholasticism, the doctrines of the responsibility and immortality of the individual soul, expressive of a religious need which, if later in origin, was felt as no less fundamental than that of union with God, resisted the counter-tendency in the current philosophy towards the Pantheism (as it is often called) which came to be especially associated with the name of

[1] In Bacon's sense of the word.

Averroes.[1] It was this same religious need the failure of Spinoza to satisfy which led at a later epoch to the widespread imputation of atheism to one who has been doubtless more justly, as well as more sympathetically, described as "God-intoxicated."

Discontent on religious grounds with either Averroism or Spinozism, however, though it may lead to unsatisfactory criticism of particular thinkers, should no more be regarded as implying a lack of philosophical depth than discontent on religious grounds with Nominalism should be regarded as implying a lack of common sense. It does not need any great dialectical subtlety to show that a thoroughgoing Nominalism or Conceptualism is really quite incompatible with our common-sense view of the world; and to neglect the truth that whatever is real is individual, and that consciousness in ourselves is unquestionably so, is no proof of philosophical profundity. I am certainly not here committing myself to

[1] Cp. *Studies in the History of Natural Theology*, p. 255.

the statement that Spinoza did this; I am only insisting that, if Spinoza or another seems to any one to propound a theory of reality which has not taken sufficient account of such experience as they know themselves to have, or remember themselves to have had, they are properly justified in basing upon this a criticism of his philosophy.

We shall have learned little from the history of philosophy if we do not expect to find that between the Scylla of a Nominalism to which Reality is a mere aimless to and fro of unconnected atoms, and the Charybdis of a Pantheism to which it is the blank and unrelieved darkness of a night in which nothing can be distinguished, there lies a stormy and a perilous passage. To no kind of experience can either Scylla or Charybdis really prove the haven where it would be. But Religion, just because it is the form of experience which is of all the most concrete, in the sense of finding nothing in us or about us with which it is merely unconcerned, is also of all others

the one to which the inhospitable character alike of the rock and of the whirlpool is most obvious. The religious soul will not be content to see its God dashed to pieces on the one, or to suffer its own self, which it knows to be God's darling, to be overwhelmed in the other.

Hence it is quite intelligible that Religion should present a front of opposition to Nominalism and to Pantheism alike. Religion can never assent to an individualism which finds the characteristic of individuality in bare exclusion of all that is other than the individual itself—and thus robs the individual itself of all content; since the religious soul knows that only in proportion as what it finds in itself is not its own but God's has it anything worth calling its own. But, on the other hand, the religious soul must find this in itself; and if it has no self in which to find it, it cannot find it at all. That what has become its own should cease to be its own would mean that having found itself in losing itself, it would then lose itself again, and this time without

finding itself at all. The doctrine of individual immortality may mean not a refusal to make the supreme effort of giving up all that we have, but a refusal to derogate from the abiding value of what in the very experience of self-surrender to God has been discovered to be not ours but God's. And, whatever be the case with the doctrine of individual immortality, at any rate the present experience of God cannot be admitted to be something which is merely public, which concerns the community in which the individual self has as such no direct part, nor to be at the most a contagious emotion, caught on days of public worship from the fellow-worshippers of one's group. A "group theory" of religion, which ascribes or tends to ascribe a genuinely objective reality only to what the individual experiences when uninfluenced by the "collective representations" which he possesses as a member of a group—such a group theory is unable to account for individual religion and must in the end see

in it an illusion. And this can never prove in the long run satisfactory.

It is, of course, impossible to deny that illusion of one sort or another has played a considerable part in the religious (as also in the moral and in the scientific) history of the human race, and I do not for one moment wish to blink the fact that this constitutes a constantly recurring difficulty for the philosopher. We must recognize that any form of experience, while being a genuine experience, an awareness of a real object, may yet be in some, or even in many, of its details illusory, and that this illusion may be in certain cases detected by the discovery of its cause, and henceforth allowance be made for it. For example, we understand how, in consequence of the earth's rotation on its axis, the sun seems to move daily through the sky over our heads from east to west; and we do not, I think, feel that anything is lost by this understanding.

But it is one thing to recognize this and

quite another thing to suppose that, so far as any real object is the exciting cause of our experience at all, the knowledge of its true nature, instead of leaving to the original experience its original value or else changing it to a form in which it may be seen to possess a higher value, including or absorbing or rendering trivial that which it had before, will empty it of all the value and significance which it had, putting nothing of at all equal or corresponding (not to say superior and inclusive) value in its place. I do not think it possible to remain content with a reduction of an experience so manifestly substantial, rational, and harmonious as a genuine religious experience can be to the rank of mere mirage or sheer illusion. Yet I feel sure that nothing less is the inevitable outcome of such "group theories" as those of the French sociologists, or even of writers with more emotional sympathy for religion than they, such as are, among ourselves, Miss Harrison and Mr. Cornford.

It is, of course, however, possible to contend that all that can be legitimately demanded for the religious experience is that which will be readily conceded to the æsthetic.

Of this type of experience, it may be contended, just the same may be said as we have urged of the religious, which is perhaps rightly to be regarded as a form of it. In its beginnings, determined by "collective representations" (witness the religious and magical origins which may be more than plausibly suspected for many or all forms of æsthetic expression) it has among civilized men become, beyond question, pre-eminently a form of individual self-expression, in which social control is more earnestly and seriously repudiated than in any other department of life. Who shall deny that it is, to use words which I employed a little way back about religion, an experience substantial, rational, and harmonious? Does not the poet or artist find a sufficient scope for the exercise of his

intellectual powers, a consciousness of reconciliation with the universe, a poignant sense of ultimate contact with reality? And yet is it not a familiar theme, as old as Plato [1] and much older, that the artist's world is a world of illusion. "The best in this kind are but shadows." [2]

Have we not here a proof that it is possible to ascribe the highest value for the individual who enjoys it to that religious experience which is the life of the mystic or the saint, without entrenching upon the ground of science or vainly struggling to bring as it were into one focus the scientific and the religious outlook?

I think it is very desirable that one should seriously put to oneself this suggestion. It is certainly true that the "conflict between art and science," while (as we may best learn from Plato's *Republic*) it may be no sham fight, yet does not trouble the artist's soul as

[1] See *Rep.*, x. 601 foll.

[2] *Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. 1. 213.

the "conflict between Religion and Science" is apt to trouble that of the religious man. It is well that the latter should ask himself why this is; and if he does ask himself this, the question must suggest itself to him, whether by frankly taking Religion to be a kind of art, he may not attain the artist's serenity. The invitation to do this was, according to one of Matthew Arnold's most characteristic poems, made to his generation by Goethe:—

> Art still has truth, take refuge there.[1]

But I do not think that this refuge either will prove for the religious soul, tossed on the waves of doubt, to be the veritable haven where he would be. For Art will only be found to be an abiding refuge so far as it claims, not a merely æsthetic "truth," but a "truth" which challenges the right of Science to be telling the whole truth about the real world.

[1] *Memorial Verses*, April 1850.

## Religion and Individual Religion

There is, no doubt, a sense in which the appreciation of Beauty is concerned with the superficial (in the literal sense), with the apparent, with the subjective; but unless it is no more than an accident that the world with which Science is concerned, solid where the world of the artist is superficial, real where that is apparent, objective where that is subjective, should by its superficial and outward appearance satisfy the æsthetic consciousness, and that in ways which pass so far beyond what can be reasonably supposed merely instrumental to the purposes of organic life and reproduction [1]—then there is involved in the structure of that world, though invisibly to Science, a Spirit to which our spirits can recognize themselves as akin, as its offspring, as made in its image—and, in the recognition of this, either we have passed from Art to Religion, or Art has itself passed into Religion and laid aside that indifference to the scientific

[1] Cp. Mr. C. J. Shebbeare, *Religion in an Age of Doubt*, p. 151.

account of reality in which its advantage over Religion was supposed to consist.

It is very easy to be misunderstood when one is dealing with the relation of Art—as also when one is dealing with the relation of Morality —to Religion. If it be said that one who holds, as I do, that the elimination of Religion as a genuine form of experience, and (at a certain level) of individual experience, would really involve the ruin of Art and of Morality too, one may be thought to mean that one cannot appreciate Beauty without some doctrine of a supernatural Artist, or own the call of Duty without some doctrine of a supernatural Lawgiver. But this is far from being my meaning. To recognize and delight in Beauty, to acknowledge the Categorical Imperative of Duty, we need no previous deduction from theological premisses. Such is the manifest splendour of the one,[1] such the manifest authority[2] of the other, that no difficulties

[1] Plato, *Phædrus*, 250B.

[2] Butler, *Second Sermon on Human Nature*.

as to fitting them into one scheme with the facts disclosed by Science can avail to obscure that splendour or to derogate from that authority, so long as we do not allow that to Science alone it belongs to unveil the true nature of Reality.

It is Religion—that is, the experience in which the soul is aware of itself as one or as capable of being one with the heart of Reality—which guarantees what we perceive of Beauty and of Goodness alike as no *merely* subjective or superficial appearances, but as intimations of the ultimate nature of that Beauty whose essential attributes are manifested therein. Not only does Religion in this way guarantee Art and Morality as laying hold of Reality, but also, by its interpretation of both as witnesses to different attributes of one Reality, it secures each against the dangers which threaten it from its complete separation from the other. The selfishness and cruelty which sometimes attend upon one-sided æstheticism lose their inspiration when those elements of

value in the world to which the sense of Beauty testifies are held to be secure in God, although certain modes of expression are found to be incompatible with Duty. And that censoriousness of a one-sided moralism which is constantly imposing limits upon artistic expression, limits which seem to the artist, with his passionate sense of Beauty, the fetters of an intolerable slavery, is corrected by the faith which, even in denying the legitimacy of certain modes of artistic expression, affirms that that which they would fain express is, so far as it is beautiful, also divine, and, even although it remain here and thus unexpressed, eternally secure in God.

I am aware that I shall seem here to some to be making for Religion in relation to Art and Morality a claim which should rather be made for Philosophy. But I do not think that Philosophy can flourish except in the soil of Religion. It is in Religion that we have the immediate consciousness of that which in

Philosophy becomes, or strives to become, explicit. In this sense I should accept the phrase, the use of which by Mr. Cornford I have criticized above, "from Religion to Philosophy," as suggestive of an important fact.

Misunderstanding is so easy in these matters that I should perhaps add that of course I do not mean to suggest that the data of the specifically religious experience are the only material with which it is the business of Philosophy to deal. No, all experience, all knowledge is alike grist to Philosophy's mill. What I mean is rather that the aspiration after a knowledge of a single ground of all things or of an all-inclusive unity, an aspiration which is the vital principle of Philosophy, is the one which has its original and its constant stimulus in that hope and promise of its fulfilment which the religious experience supplies.[1]

The result of our inquiries so far has been

[1] Cf. Royce, *Problem of Christianity*, ii. 8.

to find the group theories of Religion which we have studied unable to do justice to individual religion, which must for them, in fact, be nothing but illusion.

# CHAPTER X

## CONCLUSION

IT would be interesting to follow up our inquiries into the theories which we have been considering by an investigation of certain philosophical accounts of Religion which insist on the social or super-individual [1] char-

[1] The group theories of Religion which we have been studying had, as we have seen, but little care for a kind of religious experience which is least conspicuous at the lower levels of culture, where the consciousness of individuality over against the group is least developed. But we shall expect more attention to be paid to it in theories occasioned rather by philosophical reflection on the experience of individuals at a high level of culture than by the study from without of the customs and behaviour of those at a lower. Nor shall we be disappointed. Such a theory as that expounded in Professor Royce's lectures on the *Problem of Christianity* (New York, 1913), to a very great extent supplies just that philosophical background for

acter of the religious consciousness, and to endeavour to discover how far we should find justice done in these to that complementary aspect of religion in virtue of which, as we have seen, it is no less the stronghold of our sense of individual worth in distinction from the worth of what has merely public or abstractly universal significance, than in virtue of its

lack of which the theories of the French sociologists are so often at fault. In these lectures Professor Royce has dwelt upon the place in the dominant religion of European civilization occupied by what he calls the "Beloved Community," and the salvation of the individual from the burden of his individual feebleness and failure through identification with a society whose soul is God—the body, as the Pauline metaphor expresses it, of Christ, in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. i. 18; ii. 9). (This doctrine has been developed by Professor Royce, as he himself tells us (p. xv), in conscious correction of the ultra-individualistic tendency—to which I have already referred—of the philosophy of religion put forward by his late friend and colleague William James in his well-known *Varieties of Religious Experience*.) It is to be wished that this eminent thinker, who in genuine comprehension of religious experience is in the first rank of contemporary philosophers, had brought into more explicit relation with his doctrine of the Community the doctrine of the

other aspect it affords a refuge for our sense of the worth of what is common and universal against the destructive criticism of Nominalism and Individualism.

But this task must be left to another occasion. Here it is only possible to prepare the way for its accomplishment by stating in a very brief and summary fashion the nature

individual as the expression of a unique purpose and the doctrine of the immortality of the individual based thereon, which he had worked out in his Gifford Lectures on *The World and the Individual.*

In the second series of Mr. Bosanquet's Gifford Lectures on *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*, with its description of human life, in a phrase borrowed from a letter of Keats, as a "vale of soul-making" (see Bosanquet, op. cit. p. 63), he has wrestled with the problem of finite individuality in a thorough-going way for which perhaps the first series of Gifford Lectures on *Individuality and Value*, with its ascription of Individuality in the true sense to the Absolute alone, had scarcely prepared us. Yet perhaps, even at the end of the second series, some of us may feel that justice has hardly been done to the finite individual. The soul is made, after all, to be *as a soul* destroyed again for ever.

In the latter essays of the collection, recently published by Mr. Bradley as *Essays on Truth and Reality*, there is a profoundly interesting discussion of those problems raised

of that problem of Individuality which, as I have already suggested, requires a more thorough-going philosophical investigation than it has received from the writers we have been discussing, and stating this with especial

by individual religious experience in dealing with which some of those most in sympathy with the type of philosophy now represented in our country by Mr. Bradley and Mr. Bosanquet have sometimes felt these thinkers least satisfactory. The appearance of the two works just mentioned is a welcome proof that they have themselves realized the legitimacy of the desire that they should put students of philosophy in fuller possession of their mature thought upon these subjects.

I have already confessed that I am left dissatisfied by Mr. Bosanquet. He certainly intends to assign high importance to the witness of religious experience, yet hardly interprets it quite fairly. Mr. Bradley, while insisting as much as ever on the essential moment of self-loss in religious experience and on the error—as it surely is—of expecting from Philosophy a guarantee of future temporal happenings, does, as it seems to me, more justice—perhaps as much justice as can be done by Philosophy—to the demands of the religious experience. It would not, it may here be noted, be correct to describe Mr. Bosanquet's and Mr. Bradley's theories of Religion, without qualification, as "group theories." For them the object of Religion is "more than social."

reference to the form in which this problem presents itself in the field of religious experience.

We contrast the individual with the universal. We think of the individual as what is unique, as just this thing and no other, and as, because it is individual, necessarily distinct from any other individual, no matter how like to itself. Even were the likeness of this individual to some other absolutely exact, even could no characteristic be affirmed of the one which could not with equal truth be affirmed of the other, yet there would still be two individuals and not one; so that, could they both be brought at once before the observer, their mutual distinctness would appear, however difficult or even impossible it would be to know in the other's absence which was which.

Of the universal, on the other hand, we think as of a nature or character, which, though perhaps found only in one individual, might conceivably, at any rate, be found in

more than one, and which is permanent in the sense that, even though it might newly begin, or again might cease altogether, to be exhibited by any individual, yet a mind once cognizant of it in one individual instance would be able to recognize it were it to reappear in another, nor would it be meaningless to inquire whether it had ever been present in any individual instance before that in which it was first by us detected.

Further, the universal cannot be conceived as existing apart from *some* individual instance. Even in the case of those moral universals (e.g. justice) which seem originally to have suggested the well-known Platonic theory of the χωρισμός or independent being of the Ideas or Eternal Natures, while we may, and indeed must, conceive them as in some sense not dependent for their validity on their actual exhibition in conduct, yet we rather think of them as what always *ought to be*, whether they are or not, than as what, independently of individual instances, actually *are*.

On the other hand, the individual must, in the first place, be an instance—even if the only instance—of a universal, whose nature can be distinguished from the fact of the existence of this individual instance of it. Apart from this it would have no character, and nothing at all could be predicated of it. In the second place, when we speak of an individual we do not generally mean what we should call merely an individual instance of a universal—an instance, e.g., of yellowness—but rather something the description of which would involve the recognition of several universals, of each of which it could be alleged as an instance—e.g. (to take Locke's favourite instance) a piece of gold which is yellow but also hard, heavy, soluble in *aqua regia*, and so forth. Moreover, it is impossible to regard either universals or individuals as all on a level with other universals or individuals respectively. Moral qualities, mathematical properties, colours, natural species, official positions, are all in some sense universals;

yet plainly they will require very various treatment; and various treatment seems no less demanded for the individuality of a sensation, of a shade of colour, of a piece of gold, of a table, of a picture, of a nation, of a religion. To attempt to do more than indicate the formidable difficulties which thus beset the question of Universals and Individuals would here be impossible; but to indicate them is necessary if we are to bring home to ourselves how long and intricate an investigation is required before we can expect to get to the bottom of the problem raised by Religion as at once a function of the social and of the individual life. For a society, though itself in a very real sense an individual, is also a universal, since it possesses those spiritual qualities which characterize it only because, and in so far as, they are possessed by the individual members of it.

If we look in one way at the individual—and here we may confine ourselves (as our subject is Religion) to the individual *man*—

what strikes us is that it is the *universal* in him, the type he represents, the character he illustrates, the cause to which he devotes himself, the point of view for which he stands, which is of value and significance. What is merely individual about him seems to have value only so far as it serves for a vehicle to these. To dwell upon it for its own sake seems to be but trivial gossip; a great man's true picture (we say) is in his works; even if we have known him after the flesh, it is a higher thing to know him thus no more,[1] but to see in the knowledge of his spiritual significance the only knowledge of him which is worthy of the name.[2]

On the other hand, we may look at the matter otherwise. Only as belonging to individuals, we may say, have types, characters, causes, points of view, any reality; apart from individuals they are mere abstractions

[1] See 2 Cor. v. 16.

[2] Cp. a remarkable sermon by the late W. G. Rutherford on *The Value of Idealism in Common Life* (Sermon VI in *The Key of Knowledge*, Macmillan, 1901).

and ideals. To the individuality of their possessors they owe it that they are ever concrete and actual.

In the philosophy of Aristotle, to which the scientific terminology of European civilization owes so much, the antithesis is brought out by the contrast between his assertion that knowledge is always of the universal, and his constant insistence, as against what he regarded as the illegitimate separation of the universal from the individual by Plato, on the primary reality of the individual. His erroneous cosmology, with its sharp distinction between the world above and the world below the spheres of the moon, enabled him to attend to the two aspects of individuality, the one when talking of the heavens, the other when talking of the earth. *Here below* the part played by the multiplicity of individuals is merely that of securing, by means of a succession of beings of one kind which differ from one another, not specifically but only numerically, the perpetuity of that specific

nature with which alone science concerns itself. *There above* are eternal individuals, each with a specifically distinct nature; and there is no need of a multiplicity of numerically different but specifically identical individuals. Such eternal individuals are the heavenly bodies in Aristotle; and of his scholastic followers some held the angels to be in like manner, although not indeed eternal (since they are created), yet immortal, and each a species by itself. The Aristotelian astronomy and the scholastic angelology may seem to be of little importance nowadays; but they may be of value even to us as showing what we must demand of a theory of individuality. If it is not to reduce the distinction between you and me to something of no worth or significance at all, such a theory must recognize alike in you and in me a nature, εἶδος, or form, belonging to each of us, and not shared by any other beings, numerically distinct from, but specifically identical with, ourselves. Each of us, that

is, must, like an Aristotelian planet or a scholastic angel, be a species by himself. The teaching of the Christian Gospel [1] that in the resurrection men shall be equal to the angels, and neither die any more nor any more reproduce their kind, should here be compared, as showing that Religion is led to emphasize the need, for its own purposes, of interpreting individuality, as Aristotle interpreted it, when it was not of terrestrial but of celestial individuality that he was speaking. While it is tempting to go on to discuss the question—which seems by no means easy to answer—whether we cannot conceive two individuals exactly alike—it is not necessary for us to do so here, since in Religion assuredly the individual becomes conscious of a unique vocation, a unique relation to God. "This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped." [2] We can scarcely imagine the celestial Potter as turning out innumerable

[1] Luke xx. 35, 36.

[2] Browning, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

copies, all exactly alike, of one pattern, in the multiplication of which there is no fresh artistic or inventive interest. Such a creator would, at any rate, be no true artist, let alone a God.

We may say that, through a religious experience, an experience which has been gained, and probably could only have been gained, in a religious community, men have come to such an enjoyment of communion with God as finds expression in the words of the Psalmist[1]: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." Out of this experience arises that genuinely religious faith in immortality which must not be confounded with the survival of primitive speculations on the dream self or with the mere egoism of the natural desire for self-gratification. Such a faith is not capable of proof

[1] Psa. lxxiii. 24.

or disproof on grounds which abstract from religious experience.[1] But if religious experience is not fundamentally illusory, this faith, too, must have substantial worth. Religion at its highest levels is illusory unless the individual, as he is in his relation to God (his experience whereof, although ceasing to be merely public or social, never becomes merely private or unsocial), is assured of the preservation of what (to quote Browning again) *he* is "worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped." What in this preservation must be lost, what kept, is beyond our powers to say. Our experience, such as it is, shows us abundantly how easily we may be mistaken as to what of our possessions inward or outward can best be spared.

As words of great men often fit states of mind which they themselves can scarcely have foreseen, this faith, combined with a con-

[1] This is what is, I think, the truth in Mr. Bradley's assertion that Religion is always *practical* (*Essays on Truth and Reality*, pp. 428 foll.), though the phrase is, it seems to me, open to grave misunderstanding.

sciousness of the indefinite possibility of error in detail even where it seems surest, may find an expression in the familiar words of one whose eschatological expectations we may find it difficult to share in the form in which he himself probably entertained them, but from whom we may hear the authentic voice of the religious experience at its best: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." [1]

[1] 1 John iii. 2.

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